The Blight of Respectability

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THE BLIGHT OF RESPECTABILITY.

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THE BLIGHT OF RESPECTABILITY

AN ANATOMY OF THE DISEASE AND A THEORY OF CURATIVE TREATMENT

BY

GEOFFREY MORTIMER. c pseud. ⊐

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CONTENTS.

1. What is Respectability?
2. The Pathology of the Disease.
3. Ladies and Gentlemen.
4. Specific Symptoms of the Malady in Women.
5. Respectability and Morals.
6. Cultured Gentility.
7. Plutocracy.
8. Villadom.
9. The Tyranny of Respectability.
10. Respectable Civilisation and After.
11. Conclusion.

"It was never merry world in England since gentlemen came up."

II. HENRY VI. iv. II.

"Opinion's but a fool that makes us scan,
The outward habit by the inward man."

PERICLES II. II.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS RESPECTABILITY?

"You live a respectable man, but I ask
If it's worth the trouble."
GEORGE MEREDITH. "The Beggar's Soliloquy."

RESPECTABLE is a word that has been wrested from its true meaning of worthy of respect, and applied to the most sordid characteristics and conditions of human life. Respectability, like vulgarity and prudery, is an Anglo-Saxon attribute appertinent chiefly to the huge middle-class part of society. It is not the fetish of "the upper ten thousand," nor do the majority of the working class bow down before it. Respectability stands for gentility, and the genteel folk are not often of the orders aristocratic and proletarian, but of the bourgeoisie. To call a decent, intelligent man respectable is to dub him genteel, and to label him so implies that he has reached about the lowest level of mental degradation. Would it not be an act of sheer defamation of character to describe Ben Jonson,

Shakspere, Dryden, Fielding, and Burns as "respectable men?" No great man has ever been, or ever can be, of the respectabilities, for the simple reason that the great are not ordinary, and the ordinary alone are respectable. Have you ever read or heard of a truly noble man or woman who was also respectable? Nobility of character and a reputation for respectability, the two things are utterly incompatible! Supposing it possible for an original mind to pursue the preposterous chimera of respectability, where would such a mind find itself ultimately? Prone and lazy on "the unclean straw of intellectual habits," an impotent among impotents, or a sheep among sheep.

The respectable man is a slave to convention, and therefore a stick-i'-the-mire. He is fearful of being deemed a crank, so fearful that he succeeds in becoming a nonentity. Now some men are born respectable; they could never be anything else. But that is no reason why they should exert the tyranny of their personal preferences over the minorities of their fellow-men. Defiance of Respectability is the beginning and the end of social progress; you cannot be at

once highly respectable and progressive. Respectability is one of those dull and sordid sins that are entirely without charm.

All good, regular conduct was once bad and irregular. But originality and irregularity are abhorred of the respectable mass. "He who lets the world, or his portion of it, choose his plan of life for him," says J. S. Mill, "has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation." It is by the exercise of this simious instinct that "genteel" people order their lives down to the minutest detail. They scout eccentricity and individuality of speculation and judgment; they live in streets of houses all built alike; they imitate each others' mode of dress, think each others' thoughts, and say "It is better to be dead than out of the fashion!"

Originality! is there anything greater under the sun? "Yes," say the Respectables, "it is better to be a sheep amongst sheep than to gain a name for eccentricity." This is why our national, moral, intellectual, and artistic advance is so slow: men and women infected by the craze for respectability act as dead weights on the arms of pioneers. Grundy, Bowdler, and

Podsnap are the three gods of the shoddy respectabilities.

Respectability! who has it not cursed and perverted at some time in his life? There is perhaps no better instance of the moral blight that respectability has upon the middle-class mind than the treatment of Mr. Bradlaugh, not only at the hands of rabid sectarians, but by timorous and respectable rationalists and utter indifferentists.

It may be taken as an axiom that if you want to blast a man's reputation as a tolerable specimen of the human race, you have merely to class him as respectable. The very word is damnatory and detestable. At best it always leaves a bad flavour of middle-class hashes in the mouth, and wafts to the nostrils the reek of stuffy parlours with horsehair couches, dried grass, and wax flowers. "A most respectable man." We all know him—a sort of factory-made cheap line in humanity, with a few prim, precise, little superstitions, no reasoned morals, and no intellectual or æsthetic needs. He is a big man of a petty sect, and on Sunday he troops a stout, silk-dressed wife and seven or eight

children to hear Boanerges hold forth at the tin Bethel at the end of the street. This is one type, perhaps the commonest. Another sort is not particularly pietistic, but "eminently respectable." He lives at Brixton or Clapham in a continuous struggle to keep up a "decent" appearance among the neighbours. His wife "takes in paying guests," and his daughters spend most of their time in blocking the pavement in front of drapers' shops. Mamma and the girls are gangrened with respectability and snobbishness, but were it not for the inherited virus they might have been decent and wholesome women. Their minds are blank to all the wider interests of life; they are simply mechanical dolls. Says a woman concerning these types: "I have known miners, railway men, iron and cotton and wool workers, many who have denied themselves physical necessities to buy and read a book, attend lectures, or a concert. I never knew a middle-class woman guilty of such a glaring want of common-sense."

To live respectably, as the world deems respectability, is to live a lie. No man or woman with a part to play in life can play it

well if they are constantly exercised as to what people will think—people, in this instance, standing for Respectability. Can any wholesome influence come out of the frowsy atmosphere of a villa inhabited by Veneerings? As well expect to find lilies within the fences of the alkali works. The fact is that what Respectability thinks is never of the slightest importance to a man of real moral stamina and vigour of intellect. He has learnt with Schopenhauer that reputation is of little avail in the making of happiness. "What we are in and for ourselves," says that philosopher, "is of sole moment; and if we have had an opportunity of seeing how the greatest of men will meet with nothing but slight from half-a-dozen blockheads, we shall understand that to lay great value upon what other people say is to pay them too much honour."

A woman who was horribly crushed in the Crewe railway accident begged the surgeon with her dying breath to set her bonnet straight. It was not death that she feared, but the opinion of that grimmer monster Respectability; a striking instance this of the firm hold that the instinct has upon feeble minds.

Yes, to be appraised as a thoroughly respectable man among Philistines, you must either possess scanty ideas, or you must perpetually dissemble your opinions. Dr. Stockman, in Ibsen's "An Enemy of Society," is ostracised by respectable society because he refuses to be an unmitigated liar. A finer satire on Respectability has never been written. Stockman discovers that the water supply of the town is polluted, and he tells the truth about it. The respectable authorities, the tag-rag of the bourgeoisie, and the toady editor of the local journal —who is at heart a Freethinker—hoot him down in compliance with the "respectable" methods of toleration usually accorded to reformers. At a public meeting the Doctor says:

"I am going to make a great revelation to you, fellow-citizens! I am going to disclose that to you which is of infinitely more moment than the unimportant fact that our waterworks are poisonous, and that our hygienic baths are built upon a soil teeming with pestilence. . . I have said I should speak of the great discovery I have made within the last few days—the discovery that all our spiritual sources of life are poisoned, and that our whole bourgeois society rests upon a soil teeming with the pestilence of lies. For I am going to revolt against the lie that truth resides in the majority."

Upon reading a Philistine opinion of himself, Diderot laughed, and said: "I must be an eccentric sort of fellow: but is it such a great fault to have preserved amid all the friction of society some vestiges of the angularity of nature?"

No thralls to Respectability can ever be natural men and women. The respectability of the middle-class is largely a growth of the Calvinistic theory of submission and poorness of spirit; the effort of the Respectables is towards docile conformity to the custom of their narrow community, "until," as Mill says, "by dint of not following their own nature, they have no nature to follow: their human capacities are withered and starved: they become incapable of any strong wishes or native pleasures, and are generally without either opinions or feelings of home growth or properly their own." No fanatical fakir ever endured the torments that some English folk inflict upon themselves before the Mumbo Jumbo of respectability. Dwarfed social endeavour, suppressed healthy desires, degraded faculties—these are the sacrifices in the name of conventionality. Daily, men and women do a score of things that they know to be hurt-

ful and insane, because they fear to be accounted "peculiar," and "not quite respectable;" and so it comes about that "the keeping up of appearances," as it is called, the incessant striving to be popular at all costs, engenders endless hypocrisies and falsehoods, and makes knaves and cowards.

Not content with warping our national character by slavish veneration of this abstraction, we have corrupted decent barbarians by inoculating them with our miserable disease of Respectability. We have clothed the innocent nude, and taught them shame, and in making them respectable we have annihilated their pristine morality, and substituted Western cant and indecency. Fortunately, however, the savage is too wholesome an animal to become respectable without protest, and in most instances, we have failed to convince him of the benefits of insanitary clothing as badges of respectability and tokens of civilisation. Quoting from Dalton, Reclus, in his "Primitive Folk," says of the Kolarian women:—

"These savage women win hearts by their frank and open manners and naïve gaiety. Mixing freely from

earliest childhood with the other sex, they have none of the prudery of Hindoos and Mussulmans, who have been brought up in strict seclusion; a prudery which at moments gives place to unclean talk, and is full of suggested obscenities. On the other hand, the modest grace of young Hos or Moonah maidens and the little girls of the Larkas is a subject of praise. Patience! Civilisation will soon cure them of this barbarism, will correct their ignorance."

It is a wretched reflection that these delightful women will one day be as respectable as the female natives of Stoke Newington.

A lady novelist writes that every English woman is a savage at heart. Does she not pay her sisters too high a compliment? The enforced clothing of the Curumbas women of Malabar, at the instigation of the "respectable English ladies" at Calcutta, is one of the pitiful examples of the indecency of thought born of our ideas of respectability. These damsels of the Curumbas tribe wore aprons of leaves suspended from a bead waistband. Such garb was not only suited to the climate, but it was charming as well as healthy. The Calcutta British Matrons thought such wear abominable. How could these women be respectable in such scanty drapery? Accordingly, by direction of Bumble,

four corporals and two sergeants of infantry were told off with a company to drag the leaf aprons from the front and behind, and to put the women into petticoats. The greenery was then burned in a bonfire. What a glorious triumph of Respectability! How thoroughly British matronly and indelicate in conception was this compulsory clothing of innocent modest women by Tommy Atkins and his "pals." Is there the least need to dwell upon the contrast of decency that these Curumbas women present to the "respectable English ladies" of Calcutta?

Our insular arrogance is the twin sister of respectability. When we are not taking pride in the personal possession of a pot-hat and a frock coat, we go about bragging of national respectability and superiority. "Every miserable fool who has nothing at all of which he can be proud," says Schopenhauer, "adopts as a last resource pride in the nation to which he belongs; he is ready and glad to defend all its faults and follies tooth and nail, thus reimbursing himself for his inferiority. For example, if you speak of the stupid and degrading bigotry of the English nation with the contempt it deserves,

you will hardly find one Englishman in fifty to agree with you; but if there should be one, he will generally happen to be an intelligent man!"

Nothing can destroy Respectability but a gradual extirpation of the *bourgeoisie.* I say gradual advisedly, and in a double sense; first, because we have many respectable relatives and friends whom we would be grieved to asphyxiate; and, second, because gradual processes in social evolution have more permanent resultants than cataclysms. Diderot, with wonderful prescience, asserted that a scientific anarchism is the extreme goal of social progress. This was in 1776. In 1897 a thousand sociologists recognise this fact, this "*diablement idéal,*" as Diderot termed it.

CHAPTER II.

THE PATHOLOGY OF THE DISEASE.

"The evil is not merely a stagnation of blood, but a stagnation of spirit. Many, no doubt, are well disposed, but sluggish by constitution and by habit, or they cannot conceive of a man who is actuated by higher motives than they are."

THOREAU.

I had written my first chapter when I met a friend possessed of the qualities of moral and intellectual seriousness, which, when conjoined with a sense of humour, are proper elements for the making of a fine man. This estimable Mentor had read my midnight lucubration with a sad heart. He told me, with appropriate gravity, that his standpoint was the ethical-cum-philosophic. Judged from that imposing standard, my "screed" depressed him by reason of its "cynicism."

"I wish," said he, "that you had dealt less ruthlessly with the Philistine. Is he not a man and a brother?"

Whereupon he proceeded to administer reproof

with Demosthenic eloquence, concluding with the altruistic admission, "Though I have endured much from the Philistine, I still love him."

Well, the Respectables are a large body, very much in the majority so far as my researches have informed me; and, if the right and the truth are on their side, they will not be worsted in a fair encounter. I am still impertinently chuckling at that charge of cynicism and ruthlessness. I love not Diogenes nor Torquemada. By all means let us be just and fear not in this anatomy of the Respectable Person. Have I not said that "were it not for the inherited virus," the veneering girls "might have been decent and wholesome women?" Did I not indicate a method of prophylaxis, a scientific, humane, and gradual extinction of the taint? Vulgarity, snobbery, prudery and obscenity are common specific contagious affections, manifesting a dangerous tendency to increase. I regard these diseases, with their concomitants and sequelæ as momentous social evils, and it is entirely on humanitarian principles that I emphatically refuse to sprinkle rose-water over the

victims of the contagion, and to leave the disorders to take their lingering and miserable course. These ailments are, without question, hereditary, and the microbes have a strong and deadly hold upon the host. I pity the vulgarian, the snob, and the prude; I commiserate them with the same sympathy that I extend to the leper, the blind, and the insane. Every physician must perforce at times be cruel to be kind; and I do not intend to exercise injudicious gentleness in treating these forms of mental disease.

It is well known that firmness, amounting occasionally to severity, is most essential in dealing with certain neuroses. Therefore, from that ethical basis upon which my honourable Mentor takes his stand, I shall discuss these social disorders in plain vigorous terms, recognising that the Respectable is not to be cured and his offspring preserved from the inherited sting by sentimental demonstrations of fraternal affection and pats on the back. Such methods as that have utterly failed. No, we must endeavour to convince the sufferer from chronic respectability that he is an anti-social being, a moral and mental paralytic, a prey to the hallucinations and

dreads of his class, showing by this very habit of imitation that serious lesions have arisen within his brain.

As in many diseases, the congenital cases of Respectability are the most stubborn, and the prognosis cannot often be technically described as "good." It is a serious and important fact to be carefully noted by the Respectable, that many incurable imbeciles are the descendants of steady, stolid, and apparently well-conducted ancestors of the trading order, the folk who live in a petty round of narrow interests, without the inclination to form their minds, and without any cultivation of the æsthetic and poetic sides of their natures. If you add to this a dour religiosity of the ultra-puritanic type, you have an excellent nidus of insanity. In every asylum you may find the heirs of such unfortunate prenatal influences. They are the victims of certain forms of Respectability, the result of "the apelike faculty of imitation" in their forbears.

What were the peculiarities of these ancestors whose idiosyncracies have degenerated into actual brain disease? *They tried to be conventional.* It was of no matter to them what Bacon

or Diderot or Herbert Spencer said about the conduct of life. Their ethical guides were the lesser lights of the sectaries, the pastors and deacons of Zoar and Bethesda, teachers often akin in intelligence to Mr. Ruskin's "little squeaking idiot," telling "an audience of seventeen old women and three louts that they were the only children of God in Turin." All their "culture" came from such inspired sources. They were afraid of God, but, as a minor poet says, more afraid of Mrs Grundy. Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Robinson were their models; the Brownian view of life was good enough for them. Was not Mr. Brown very respectable? Did not Mrs. Smith set the example in *ton*, in Little Muddleton Road? Was not Mrs. Robinson distantly related to a branch of the aristocracy? They lived like human sheep. If one of the flock jumped automatically, the others began to jump; and one moral or social *baa* set all the rest bleating in the same respectable mechanical strain. Rarely a boy or a girl in the community began to develop healthy independence of judgment, or a taste for one of the arts or sciences. If the youthful rebel had tough

grit in him he pursued his own course against tremendous obstacles, and amid taunts of eccentricity and disrespectability, until he freed himself from the miserable petty tyranny of the Brownian and Smithian codes. But if the boy or the girl of originality was timid and submissive, Respectability triumphed, and society lost a useful member. It is impossible to estimate the immense amount of moral, intellectual, and artistic capacity that has been impaired, perverted, and stamped out of existence in the bud by the slavish worshippers at the altar of the Goddess Grundy.

I do not deny that a strong mind may emerge comparatively unscathed from the blighting environment of Little Muddleton Road; but a man or woman with inherited Respectability in his or her fibres, starts life's race handicapped, and it may need years before the poison can be eradicated from the moral system. In most cases the true congenital Respectable is a hopeless subject for experimentation. The task of reforming him needs far more patience and tact than most reformers possess; and even if the patient shows improvement, a transference into the infected

areas is certain to result in a recrudescence of the disorder. Remember the true Congenital Respectable inherits a very vigorous and malignant taint; that his system is surcharged with humours that resist the most patient treatment. Are we, then, to despair of a cure? The answer must be, "No, not if all the available hygienic remedies are employed while the Respectable is young." I could not hope to heal the mind of a patient of forty, for instance, and especially a female patient of that age. In women there are characteristic symptoms of a nature so peculiar that we must differentiate them in our pathology from the specific manifestations of the affection in men.

Obviously, the greatest impediment to recovery lies in the fact that, in nine instances out of ten, the subject has no desire to be cured. Respectability presents the phenomenon of most neurotic diseases: the patient does not understand that he is ill. If you tell a maniac that he is not the Emperor of Russia, but an inmate of Bedlam, he will think you are the madman, and that he is the sane man. In the same way, a person

attacked by an insidious wasting malady, imagines he is in robust health, because, when he has eaten a full meal he feels ready to eat another. He thumps himself on the chest, and says, "Sound as a bell! Look at my appetite!" Like these deluded folk, the Respectable believes firmly that his derangement is a normal healthy state. All his friends are Respectable; he is Respectable also, thank heaven!

While the Respectable remains in this grateful frame nothing can be done for him. You must convince him that Respectability is a species of mania, and until you have done this, there is palpably no hope of curing him. Ridicule, contempt, satire—these are the instruments that you must employ. Scarify him mentally, if you can, with Titanic laughter at his wretched hallucination. Kick his preposterous idol till the sawdust flies out of it; deride it, mutilate it, tear off its flimsy tinsel. You must be prepared for a tussle with the Respectable. He will fight long and savagely for his fetish, for it is the god of his fathers, and he was taught to revere it when he left the cradle. He is fighting for all that he conceives to be most dear and sacred to

him, and he looks upon you as an impious iconoclast and a fanatic. To a Respectable, all are mad who seek to destroy illusions, to show the inside of things, and to disencumber the social ground of the tares and thistles that make such a brave show. He loves his world of seems and shams and hypocrisies.

Our hope is in the young, in the rising generation, ere they are hopelessly crushed and disfigured beyond all recognition beneath the wheels of Respectability's triumphal one-horse brougham; before their callow brains are dwarfed and warped in Dame Grundy's seminary and in Dr. Birch's select school for the sons of wholesale tea merchants; before the miasma of Villadom has poisoned their morals and befogged their mental vision. Education must be widened and democratized. The principle that "a mon's a mon for a' that" must be inculcated, and true worth of character will then be dissociated in the mind from that vile, tawdry, make-belief virtue called Respectability.

CHAPTER III.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

"The snob in soul who looks above,
Trampling on what's beneath."

FRANCIS ADAMS.

"Is she a Lady or a Person?" asked a British Matron when I spoke of a certain young woman. The question is well calculated to set one pondering on those nice distinctions of class, and sub-distinctions within the classes, characteristic of most semi-civilised and so-called highly civilised nations of the world. Unquestionably, my interrogator was a "lady" in the popular sense of the title. She lived in a large house, received visits from the rector and the curate, gave parties attended by well-to-do tradesfolk and one or two professional men, with their wives and families, and refrained from committing the misdemeanour of carrying parcels in the street. Undoubtedly she was considered a lady by most members of her own order. But was she a

lady? I confess I do not know what you in particular mean by a lady. I must know you tolerably intimately before I can even hazard a surmise. This dame was the daughter of a tradesman, and she earned her own livelihood. That is quite enough to stamp her as a mere person in the judgment of an immense class.

For many years I have been trying to understand the jargon of Respectability, and I have failed. I cannot get three people in one room to entirely agree as to the constituents of a lady or a gentleman. One will tell me that the claim to the distinction depends upon birth; another denies this, and says it is simply a matter of good manners; but a third, in spite of my protest that the manners of my housemaid betoken a *gentle*-woman, affirms that her social status debars a domestic servant from the label *lady*, though she may be a very well-behaved young woman. If you think it is easy to obtain a precise definition of lady and gentleman, I suggest that you interrogate your near acquaintances, and make notes of the answers. Perchance your luck is better than mine.

No, I do not to this day know exactly what

people mean by calling this man *gentleman* and that man plain *man*. I have heard that there was a time when only those men who plundered the poor, swore "gad-zooks" and very much worse than that, got drunk nearly every night, and debauched a great number of maids were the only respectable gentlemen in the land, all the rest, who were not "up to" this "form" in usual practice being churls, and knaves, and clowns. It is a matter of history that these crapulous bandits were the only gentlemen of their day.

But take the phrase in its most modern sense. A. is a patrician, and therefore pre-eminently a gentleman in the esteem of tens of thousands. He uses the foulest back-slum expressions in the hunting-field, "pals" with harlots, gamblers of shady notoriety, and ruffianly hybrid sportsmen of the turf and ring, drinks to excess, and, after a career of low vice and mean trickery, he pays his creditors—many of them struggling tradesmen—sixpence in the pound, or less than that. *You* say he is no gentleman. Quite so; but he is received in that polite company where you and I would be cold-shouldered, and the society that receives him is undoubtedly very high and good

society. Moreover, the Respectable million, though they may roll their eyes unctuously at his misconduct, would be extremely delighted to have the honour of entertaining Lord A. at afternoon tea. You know perfectly well, my friend, that his lordship is "a gentleman bred and born," and that circles closed to B., an impecunious artist, but a man of exemplary deportment and refinement of feeling, are open to Lord A.

I hold that the terms lady and gentleman, like the word Respectable, have become grossly perverted, and are now merely the connotations of an odious snobbery. I would like to see the phrases deleted from every dictionary. In their original sense they were good words, *i.e.*, *gentle*-man and *gentle*-woman, or if you will, lady. But they are now utterly corrupt and meaningless, except when applied to the vulgar of all ranks. The lady who does washing calls for the woman's linen. The cant term has become the privileged title of the vulgarest plebeian. An ignorant, ill-mannered, middle-class woman dubs herself Lady, and describes her cultured governess as a Person.

Diogenes went about with a lantern looking for a man. Some of us are questing for those mythical personages known as ladies and gentlemen; and, like Mrs. Gamp, who doubted the existence of Mrs. 'Arris, we are feign to believe "there aint no sich a person." When the majority disagree as to the outward semblance and the inner attributes of "real gentlefolk," how can we distinguish individuals of the order?

At a flower show I once overheard the daughter of a provincial solicitor remark to her "lady" friend: "My dear, there is really *no one* here but us." I looked around, and saw "bankers and brewers, men of evil omen," with their resplendent wives and daughters, and a great number of social small-fry. But these were nobodies. They were not lawyers, or the sons and daughters of lawyers, therefore they were nonentities. How quaint are the invidious distinctions and the usages of Snobbery! For example, it is considered impertinence if a brewer follows the hounds in a scarlet coat, but a banker may wear the "pink and buckskins." Such, at any rate, is the unwritten law in some hunting districts. As for army snobbishness, it is well

known that in several regiments the impecunious officer, not "up to" the extravagant "form" of the mess, is regarded as a cad by brainless, swaggering subalterns, whose expenditure on their stomachs amounts to several hundred pounds per annum. But to write upon the inflated Respectability of "the Service' would require a separate section of this essay. It is enough to say that the bullying, blustering military Respectable is usually a scion of a *parvenu* family. The type is not only to be found in the regular forces; it is very common in the county militia and in the provincial volunteer corps. A son of a wine merchant, or some other prosperous tradesman, secures a lieutenancy in the volunteers, and soon rises to a higher rank. He is an officer, and therefore a "gentleman;" and he lords it over other tradesmen and tradesmen's sons with the air of a patrician major-general. One of these precious jackanapes once abused me for a "civilian," and threatened me with "an orderly," in a raucous tone of wrath, because I inadvertently trespassed within the lines of a volunteer camp. I said: "Where is the orderly? I'll wait for him," and I sat down on the grass

and smoked my pipe, and summoned fortitude for the awful tribunal of a court-martial. But the orderly came not, though the "civilian" waited long and patiently.

Much as I dislike slang, I find the cant terms "side" and "bounce" so admirably adapted to my purpose in delineating certain phases of Respectability that I may perhaps be pardoned for using them in this attempt at a scientific exposition. Side and bounce will carry you far in Respectable society. Self-assertiveness is an excellent thing. Johnson and Carlyle were born with the faculty; they knew how to inspire awe, and no one dared to contradict them. The Yankees call this quality "side." They say that an egotistical, swaggering, dominant man "puts on a lot of side." Many men and women make their way to Respectability by putting on side. The rules are: (1) To appear to know all about everything. (2) to talk in a loud voice, and to interrupt other speakers. (3) to push, jostle, and trample upon the weak, the very young, and the diffident. The man who observes these rules is sure to get on in the world.

Have you not seen the crowd cower like

frightened sheep at the sound of a self-important voice? If you wish to get the better of your brother man, you must terrify him and awe hin into admiration. There is a good story of Colonel Burnaby. He was once speaking on a political platform, and some dissentients made a hubbub, and shouted "Chuck him out!" Burnaby knew the value of "side." He walked down to the menacing rowdies, asked one of them for a light, sat down among them, and smoked his pipe.

We may not love bumptious, thrusting mortals, who make their brother men their stepping-stones to higher things. But we are all more or less envious of their success; and we are always giving way to them, and making their path easy and pleasant. When we see a pompous personage walking grandly up Pall Mall, and gazing scorn upon the vulgar herd, we are often tempted to step up to him and say, as Douglas Jerrold, or someone else, once said to one of these superior persons: "Pray, sir, are you anyone in particular?" But we don't do it. We wither beneath the glassy stare of an eye-glass.

Some men are born with "side." It is easy and natural to them. As children they are never the

horse, but always the driver when playing at horses, and at school they become cocks of the walk and chiefs of the dormitories. They are destined to be highly respected among the Respectables, for the rank and file of Respectability like to be dominated.

The other day I read a letter from a young English Respectable settled in South Africa. He wrote: "You have no idea how much time it takes to kick sense into nigger servants." Glorious British supremacy! That is the way to plant the banner of civilisation in heathen lands.

In a modern comedy which I have seen played (I forget the title), a flunkey who inherits an unexpected fortune, thumps the table with his fist, crying, "Now I'll be a gentleman! I'll be a *gentleman*, by God!" You will possibly try to convince me that this fellow never could become a gentleman. Why not? Money makes the man. He may not be a *gentle*-man in *your* sense, but he is a *gentleman* in the estimation of an immense number of the "general public." Do not dupe yourself with the notion that there is only one kind of gentleman in the community. There are at least a dozen sorts—the true gentle-

man, the real gentleman, my idea of a gentleman, your idea of a gentleman, Mrs. Grundy's gentleman, the Veneering conception of a gentleman, the Oxford University definition of a gentleman, the crack cavalry notion of a gentleman, the county society idea of a gentleman, the gentleman who keeps a shop, but is too gentlemanly to sell you things over the counter, the natural gentleman, the born gentleman, the gentlemanlike person, and so on. Is there no room for Jeames in this mixed assemblage? Once and for all, clear your mind of the fallacy that your especial conception of a gentleman is the *only* true one. There are, fortunately, not one, but several standards of feminine beauty. There are also several criteria of the real gentleman and the perfect lady.

Turn to the dictionary for a "correct definition" of gentleman if you wish to fog your mind still more upon this subject: "Gentleman (from *genteel* and *man*)—In a general sense, every educated person above a labourer, an artisan, or a tradesman, an individual possessed of the conduct, habit, and outward appearance which belong, or are expected to belong, to persons born

and educated in a high social position; a man in any station of life who is possessed of good breeding and refined manners, strict integrity and honour, kindliness of heart, and suchlike qualities; in a limited sense, a person of good fortune and good family, whether titled or not; one who bears a coat of arms; a term of complaisance or respect, as in the plural *gentlemen*, when addressing a number of persons." Does this hotch-potch of contradiction help you in determining the qualities of a gentleman? I confess it is of no service to me.

No, we must end this disquisition as we began it. Terminology merely bewilders and frustrates clear thought on the question. There is obviously room and to spare for all of us in the temple of gentility. We can all be gentlemen and ladies if we choose. The only thing to decide is, which sort? Personally, I feel honoured at being spoken of as "that man." "I endeavour," writes M. Taine, "rightly to comprehend the epithet so essential 'a gentleman'; it constantly recurs, and comprises a mass of ideas wholly English. . . In France we have not the word, because we have not the things, and these three

syllables, as used across the Channel, summarise the history of English society."*

* "Notes on England."

CHAPTER IV.

SPECIFIC SYMPTOMS OF THE MALADY IN WOMEN.

"Their hypocrisy is a perpetual marvel to me, and a constant exercise of cleverness of the finest sort."

THACKERAY, "Mr. Brown's Letters to a Young Man."

"It would take a large volume to contain the authentic accounts of deception practised by women."

DR. E. J. TILT, "The Change of Life."

Women are particularly susceptible to the disease of Respectability. Our sisters esteem rank and birth; they bow down to all kinds of idols with a veneration seldom equalled in men. Form, ceremonies, modes of dress, points of etiquette, and social observances mean more to them than to us; and it is difficult to prove to them the hollowness and inutility of mere seems, because externals satisfy their sense of decorum and give them pleasure. The average *bourgeois* woman reads the court news and aristocratic tittle-tattle with avidity mingled with envy. Baubles, insignia, uniforms, and the pomps of officialdom

attract and dazzle her, and she would rather know a stupid peer than a sage, unpretentious philosopher, man of science, or poet.

Notice the large proportion of women in the crowds that gather outside a West End mansion, or at the door of a church, on the occasions of a ball or a fashionable wedding. Many women will travel long distances, and endure severe fatigue and discomfort to gain a transitory glimpse at titled personages. Lacking the power of analysis, and being deficient in imagination, they admire the popular and ostentatious, and contemn the persons and the things of true worth. Besides this, women's sense of humour is less keen than that of men; they fail to see the droll side of customs and fetishes, and they get angry with those who jest and chuckle at grotesque ceremonies and functions. It matters not to the middle-class woman how good or wise a man or woman may be if they do not conform to preposterous codes and usages.

The romantic youth who imagines that most women are more sentimental and romantic than himself, discovers his error when he becomes a lover, and is received as a suitor in the family

of his inamorata. He finds the Little Muddleton Road folk extremely practical and respectable. Materfamilias may possibly have been slightly tinged with romance and poetry in her teens; but at fifty she is a slave to Respectability, and she teaches her daughters, in season and out, that they must, before all else, be "Respectable members of society." Is it a matter for wonder? Naturally, the romantic youth puzzles over this shrewd, business-like phase of woman's character; but he forgets that "human beings, cramped under worse than South Sea Isle taboo," develop astuteness in order to survive. You cannot expect women who have been fenced around by Respectability and restricted to the back parlour and the kitchen, to be wild, free, natural creatures, and nymphs of the woodland. We ought not to have imprisoned them in this way at the beginning. By this time, alas! the majority of them appear to hug their fetters.

The black shadow of the plague of Respectability is over love and the relations of the sexes, and women suffer more than men from this terrible blight. Respectability isolates the sexes before marriage, and only allows them to dis-

cover each other's idiosyncracies, caprices, and foibles when they are inseparably united ankle to ankle and wrist to wrist, to hobble on through life, and pretend that they are enjoying the penance. I do not say that the shackles *always* gall. It is almost a sheer question of chance if they do not. For this fearful uncertainty Respectability is much to blame. Girls are immured and guarded, like vestal virgins of old; there is no wholesome widespread social commingling of the sexes. Boys are free; but what is their liberty worth to them, when girls are watched, chaperoned, and secluded at the very age when their society is most sought by the youth of the opposite sex? This nunnery system is practically restricted to the middle-class Respectables. What is its effect upon the morals and the weal of the order? Most disastrous. The young man, in a very large number of instances, gains his knowledge of womankind among the flashy, flighty, and even more undesirable specimens of the sex. He meets the Little Muddleton Road girls at parties occasionally, but if he walks home from chapel with one of them, Paterfamilias or Mamma intervenes, and cuts

short the friendship, or they want to know the young fellow's "intentions" towards Ethel. His own parents tell him he is too youthful, or too poor, to think of wooing yet; and I have even known mothers who excluded all girls from the house for fear that their sons should fall in love prematurely.

Now, it is quite probable that the young man has no "intentions," beyond gaining a friend in one of the Little Muddleton Road girls. He may simply desire social intercourse with one of the feminine kind, out of obedience to an eternal and immutable law of attraction. But no, such intimacies, unless they are distinctly understood to be the prelude to marriage, are rarely permitted by the Respectables. "It is not proper for Ethel to be seen about with that young Simpkins. What will Mrs. Robinson think?" Therefore Ethel is interdicted from communication with the estimable Simpkins, and injured propriety is appeased and quieted.

I say without hesitation that such isolation is ruinous to the morals of the community. Finding how exceedingly difficult it is to associate with the daughters of the Respectables, young

Simpkins finds companions among the female outcasts of society, women who besmirch his romance, and degrade his pure passion to the lowest animal lust. The world is full of love, could he but find it; but Respectability locks it up in fusty dens, and says: "You mustn't be a close friend of my daughter. That will never do! If you were engaged to her it would be a different matter; but you're not, and people would talk." So Simpkins goes away, and "picks up" very questionable girls in the street, and buys his first experience of "love." And the saddest thing is that he forms his opinion about women from these types, which is, of course, unwise, to say the least. But is he wholly to blame for this? No, he is one of the victims of Respectability, the grim tyrant who mars and blasts millions of human lives in England. At thirty-five Simpkins is a *blasé*, cynical young man-about-town, a sufferer, probably, from inordinate sexuality, with a profound contempt for all women, founded on his miserable experiences with female harpies and panders. "A fool and sinner," cries the moralist. Yes, but there are many like to him amongst us; and they were once decent, healthy, chivalrous young men.

And what of the isolated young girl? Her case seems to me even more sorrowful and piteous. Half of life is a sealed book to her. She has scarcely any ideas that are not delusions about love and the opposite sex, and the most important offices of her being. Her natural impulses have been suppressed, stunted, and perverted, and her physical health is probably feebler than that of the dissipated young man. She marries late, dazed with joy that her hour has come at last, and frequently awakes in the first year of marriage to the truth that she knew little about men in general, and not nearly enough about the man she has wedded; that she was wofully inexperienced and ignorant, and that Respectability condemns her to drain the bitter cup of disappointment to the dregs, to drain it with composure and a smiling face to the world. She was not allowed to mix freely with men. All her ideas of male human nature are derived from mawkish novels and story books, often written by women as ill-informed as herself. Many women have confessed to me that they did not understand men till they married one, and many men have said the same concerning women.

How, then, can we lessen the chances of drawing the wrong card in the great lottery of marriage? Certainly not by the sequestration of youths and maidens, for that is one of the chief causes of unsuccessful unions. Grundyism and Respectability must be set at defiance, and boys and girls in adolescence allowed to form companionships with each other. The artificial barriers between them must be broken down; the old stupid inhibitions rescinded, and a wholesome association not only permitted, but by every means encouraged. Education in life through the fellowship and the interchange of ideas between the sexes is one safeguard against wreckage in the perilous journey of matrimony.

Discoursing upon the "eternal feminine," Schopenhauer says: "Individual and partial exceptions do not alter the fact that women are, and will always remain, the most thorough and incurable Philistines. . . Their domination and influence ruins modern society. . . The essentially European lady is a being who ought to have no existence at all; there ought, on the other hand, to be housewives and girls who hope to become such, and who are, in consequence,

brought up to domesticity by subordination. Just because there are *ladies* in Europe, women of a lower grade, who form, therefore, the great majority of the sex, are much more unhappy than they are in the East."

As to the charge of Philistinism, I am, unfortunately, compelled to agree with the pessimistic mysogynist. Women are the larger part of humanity in this country, and, that part being Philistine, it must exercise a bad influence upon society in the mass. I do not deny that the spirit of rebellion lurks in every woman's breast, but, for all that, women are not readily persuaded to rebel against absurd conventions. Their great desire is to be on the popular side, and in the ranks of the mightier force, because unpopular causes are generally accounted discreditable by the majority. Women, therefore, set a high value on Respectability, and they endure much suffering to maintain it. Yet here and there we find women as leaders and foremost fighters in assaults upon irrational institutions and customs, and they are often wise tacticians and valorous assailers. But such women are not of the Respectables; they are thinkers and re-

formers who have cast aside the cumbrous, tawdry trappings of that order, so that they may be of service to humanity. The Philistine woman cares little or nothing for social advance and the welfare of posterity, and in this respect she is always rather more apathetic or actively hostile to progress than the Philistine man. She feels that a woman has more to lose than a man by abandoning conventionalities and orthodox opinions. But this dread is somewhat ill-founded and exaggerated, because there are many unconventional men only too ready to warmly welcome the women who revolt, and not only to bid them cheer, but to pay them high homage for their bravery and independence. In the long run, a woman gains far more esteem and friendship in the army of the Unconventionalists than she wins from the host of the Respectables.

Timidity is one of the prime sources of the disease of Respectability in both sexes, and women are by nature more timid than men in the matter of revolt against ignorant Public Opinion. The result is that women are much less free than men in so-called free countries. "A man glories in being considered bold, but a woman shrinks from

the charge of boldness, as degrading to her sex."* And here I shelter myself behind a doughty champion of women, because if I wrote the indictment which he has set down, my ethical-cum-philosophical Gamaliel, and possibly many of my women readers, would charge me with "cynicism" and "sex-bias." I quote again from Mr. Gibson, who, in this charge of the alleged untruthfulness of women, is almost as emphatic as Schopenhauer: "Owing to the subordinate position of women, *they are less truthful than men.* They work up to their ends without the exercise of force, and must therefore use guile. Men lie as readily as women when they think lies will serve their purpose, but, having more freedom, and being less afraid of conflict, they have less cause to lie. *Women are taught to lie from their childhood, in order to hide their desires, their disappointments, and their sufferings.* Women are driven in upon themselves, and in sheer self-defence lie as men are not called upon to lie."†

I know several charming women who lie most glibly and as to the manner born, without a tinge

* "The Emancipation of Women," by J. Gibson.

† The italics in this passage are mine.

of shame; indeed, it is a difficult matter to make sure that you have "got them," so to speak, for their speech is so slippery, and they fib so artistically that no reliance can be placed upon their admissions of belief or disbelief in this or that. All that they say must be swallowed with a large grain of salt. But let me qualify this impugnment somewhat. I think we may fairly say that the tarradiddles of women are not generally of the more ignoble order of lies. They are mostly pretty little semi-transparent falsehoods which do not utterly deceive the hearer who has studied the psychology of women. It is Respectability that makes cowards and cozeners of men and women; and those who imagine that they have the most to lose by frankness will naturally practice the most deception.* The woman-thrall to convention is forced to use the weapons of falsehood and to don the armour of deceit. In corroboration of this assertion, I shall again quote the words of another writer, and a woman to boot. Miss Violet Hunt, a clever satiric novelist, thus describes the unhappy girl who has been inoculated with the virus of Respectability:—

* Heine, in his confessions, says: "We men will sometimes lie outright; women, like all passive creatures, seldom invent, but can so distort a fact that they can thereby injure us more surely than by a downright lie."

"How one knows the kind of girl! One meets a specimen in almost every house-party. She is nicely dressed, but not quite so nicely as the other girls staying in the house. She has charming manners, but there is something of the offensive and defensive sharpness of the street Arab about her. She has had to take care of herself ever since she was grown up, and make her tongue do the work of chaperonage. If it rains, she is in mute agony, because she cannot afford to spoil her clothes. She takes Champagne regularly at dinner because she does not have it at home. She is at some pains to propitiate her hostess, because she intends to be asked again. She holds her tongue when grand functions are mentioned, because she was not there. In short, she is a kind of innocent whited sepulchre; a frail, jerry-built edifice, whose prestige may be destroyed at any moment by untoward revelations as to her social standing, whose whole endeavour is to give the impression that she lives in a mentionable part of London, and dresses on more than thirty pounds a year."*

This is a pitiless exposure of the shifts and subterfuges to which you must stoop in posing as a lady or gentleman, when you are only a person. What happiness, what profit, come out of such masquerading? It is better, a hundred times better, to save your soul alive, and preserve something of self-respect, as one of the unreceived and unrecognised Non-Respectables. You will find

* "The Way of Marriage."

this enchanted garden of Philistia, fenced with high walls bristling with spikes, and set with warning boards, is a very shoddy Paradise when you are admitted to it on sufferance. It is the domain of the "bores and bored," the haunt of parasites and toadies, incessantly scheming and distrusting each other in a deadly dull atmosphere of uncongeniality.

My sister, you gain *nothing* by fostering this malady of Respectability, by vapouring and wasting your sweetness in the aridity of the Little Muddleton Road. So long as you slavishly conform to the barbaric customs and codes of that wretched clan, so long will you be abject and unhappy. Come out of the fetid air of the Charnel-house of Convention, rip off those corsets and cramping disguises, cast away your high-heeled boots, and stand erect and fearless among men and women who dare to live free uncontaminated lives, beyond the reek and blight of the infected purlieus.

CHAPTER V.

RESPECTABILITY AND MORALS.

Mrs. Alving: Oh! that perpetual law and order! I often think it is that which does all the mischief here in the world. "Ghosts." IBSEN.

"Reputation is an idle and most false imposition; oft got without merit." "OTHELLO."

That which people call thorough Respectability is, in the main, very bad morality. I do not state that the disease under discussion invariably annihilates the subject's sense of justice, integrity, and charity, but it does so in many cases, and in the generality of instances, it certainly perverts the ethical judgment. The true Respectable is compelled to work out his own social salvation and prestige by means of consistent duplicity and craft. He must be artificial to succeed in winning the popularity that he craves. He has, therefore, two sets of opinions—one for the sanctum and the other for the market-place. For example, to satisfy the Brownian code, our Respectable, though he may be anti-

Sabbatarian in private belief and practice, is careful to dissemble his views on the question. He probably goes to chapel, at least now and then, in order to maintain a reputation for Respectability, but he has been known to sneak by devious ways to his favourite side bar at the conclusion of his penance. Brown knows nothing about the side bar; he gulls himself with the idea that Smith attends Bethesda from a deep sense of devotion.

But Brown is as great a humbug as Smith. Has he not been heard to declare in private that his regular attendance at chapel is a matter of business? And, as for Robinson, does he not absent himself from service whenever he is beyond the espionage of the Little Muddleton Road clan? I have even seen him fishing at Datchet on Sunday. I do not wonder that these three worthies distrust each other in trading. Each one is conscious in fleeting moments of honest self-introspection that the man who habitually deceives his neighbours concerning his religious, political, and social opinions, is scarcely the one to practise strict commercial probity. Nor,

indeed, is he. Respectables who dupe their neighbours as to their moral and intellectual beliefs and convictions are just as likely to defraud them in business transactions, and I have never met an intellectual liar who was scrupulously truthful and upright in his business affairs.

A man, for one reason or another, emotional or purely expedient, wishes to believe, or to persuade his acquaintances that he believes, certain theological doctrines, and, by a process of deliberate stultification of his reason, he may actually cajole himself that he *does* believe them. Is this the kind of man who will sedulously guard against soiling his hands in dirty commercial enterprises? I think not. If he deceives you about his private views, and plays the mental poltroon and hypocrite in public, you may be almost certain that he adulterates his bread, or sells his customers American Cheddar, assuring them that it is of English make. We cannot draw a sharp line of distinction betwixt intellectual and moral dishonesty. The man who pretends to have Radical leanings, when he is at heart a Tory, is the man who will probably swindle you in the

way of trade. A trimmer and an opportunist is to be distrusted all round.

Respectability, like emasculation, makes men cowardly, untruthful, and mean-spirited. It is a terrible moral and mental blight upon the community. Do you not know the unctuous provincial tradesfolk who never attend their local theatres for fear of the Puritans of Little Peddlington? I have known scores of them—aye, and seen them with my own eyes at the Alhambra and other places of entertainment in London. They don't spend all their holiday in town at Exeter Hall and the City Temple. I need not say any more about these unmitigated impostors; but this passage from Ibsen's "Ghosts" will not be an inapt illustration of their slyness:—

"Manders: What! Do you mean to say that respectable men from home here would——?

"Oswald: Have you never heard these respectable men, when they got home again, talking about the way in which immorality was getting the upper hand abroad?

"Manders: Yes, of course.

"Mrs. Alving: I have, too.

"Oswald: Well, you may take their word for it. They know what they are talking about! (Presses his hands to his head). Oh! that that great, free, glorious life out there should be defiled in such a way!"

When Respectability has a strong hold on a man's moral sense, there is no low crime that it may not lead him to commit. Respectables, like the congenital criminals described by Lombroso, almost invariably profess religion, and many are outwardly very devout, but full within of ravening and venality. "He shows the whites of his eyes on the Sabbath, and the blacks all the rest of the week," says Thoreau. When the plate is passed around after divine service, the Respectable ostentatiously deposits a florin upon it, registering a secret vow that he will get back that coin,, with ample interest, by some shady trick of trade on Monday morning. He gets it, too, you may be sure, and with a swinging profit on it, in consideration of his Sabbath generosity. There may be treasure laid up in heaven for the Respectable, but he is not the fool to despise the good things of this life. He believes that all things have been given unto him richly to enjoy, here and hereafter, and he takes care that none of these good things go by mistake to the wrong quarters. His golden rule is, obtain from others all that you can. However latitudinarian he may be upon some points of doctrine, he is

strictly orthodox in the application of that useful text, "Blessed are the poor." "Decent Society" is full of these whited sepulchres; their dank, poisonous stench pervades every Little Muddleton Road in the Kingdom.

I like to hear the working man speak his mind on the Respectables. The British working man has his palpable faults and failings, but he is most often free from the disease of Respectability. He knows worth of character when he sees it, and he detests the two-faced dealings, snobbishness, and cant of his self-styled superiors. The British working man has his failings, I say, but he is not very seriously infected with Respectability, except in rare instances. He is a cleaner, much more moral man than the *bourgeois*, and considerably more intelligent as a rule, because he is under no social necessity to lie to his better judgment and juggle with his reason. The proletariat, like the aristocratic class, have obtained a tolerable liberty of opinion and conduct. They can afford to be non-Respectables, and they possess the pluck to be honest thinkers. And one can say this without having a profound veneration for "noble lords" and the institution of the

peerage, and without intending to whitewash blackguards, whether they be mere patricians or simple costermongers. A friends of mine, a man of feeling, once sojourned for a space in the home of a provincial linen-draper of eminent, Respectability. I don't know what my friend was doing in that galley; I can't explain the juxtaposition of a Man of Feeling in such company; but it is enough to say that my eccentric friend was there. Well, the highly Respectable linen-draper was likewise "very religious," as the phrase is, and he used continually to dwell upon the importance of devotional exercise, as most Respectables do. He read Scripture aloud to his family and assistants, went to chapel regularly, observed Sunday scrupulously, behind drawn window blinds, believed in small profits and quick returns, drove a good trade, and held his head high, for the sober, God-fearing, enterprising shopkeeper that he was. At meal times this fellow would hold forth on grace—a virtue in which he was strangely lacking—also on obeying the precepts of Christ. "Ah," he would say, rolling the yellows of his greedy little eyes; "ah, that I were more like the Master!" Now, this speech in-

cessantly on the lips of a sweater and a hypocrite began to cause the Man of Feeling's gorge to rise, for he was a healthy, decent liver, and a hater of cant. So one day, when the Respectable lifted his gaze to the ceiling and muttered his usual aspiration, the Man of Feeling could endure the sickening ordeal no longer.

"Like the Master!" he cried vehemently. "You wish to be like the Master, and you pay your female assistants eight or ten shillings a week, and expect them to live on that miserable sum! Don't insult Christ! Don't cant and pretend that you wish to be a penniless socialist, and go about trying to do good. *You*!" And, with these words, the Man of Feeling arose, and left that Respectable house, shaking its dust from his feet, and panting to breathe once more a pure and bracing air among the non-Respectables, to whom, by moral conviction, he rightly belonged.

Ah! "the mud-hearted Bourgeois!" I don't wonder that another Man of Feeling, poor, sensitive, pitying, indignant Francis Adams, called you by that title! Can you by any human power be dragged out of the slime in which you love to wallow?

Yet these are the censors of genius, the founders of public taste, the friends of religion, the conservers of morality, forsooth! Every little shallow, mean-souled Respectable thinks himself capable of deciding that Shelley and Burns were "immoral;" that this or that work of genius is "injurious to morals;" that one brilliant man is morally incapacitated from assisting in legislation, and that another ought to be imprisoned for the expression of heterodox religious or political opinions. British Respectability makes Britain the laughing-stock and butt of the wits of the world. Nay, more; the Respectable's stupid blatant "patriotism" and bullying arrogance cause us to be hated in all the quarters of the globe.

I repeat that Respectability is practically incompatible with moral worth. With true, sound, broad morality it is quite incompatible. You cannot grow grapes on thorn bushes, nor force lilies among stinging-nettles. Politics, commerce, the relations of the sexes, science, art, and literature, are all more or less corrupted by the mephitic blight of Respectability.

I will conclude this chapter with a quotation

from M. Taine, who estimates our insular propriety very shrewdly in his entertaining "Notes on England." "I am acquainted with a London merchant who visits Paris twice yearly on business. When he is there he is very jovial, and amuses himself on Sunday as freely as anyone else. His Paris host, who visited him at his home in London, where he was made thoroughly welcome, going downstairs on Sunday to the room where there was a miniature billiard table, pushed the balls about on it. The merchant in alarm begged him to stop at once, saying, 'The neighbours will be scandalised should they hear this.'"

CHAPTER VI.

CULTURED GENTILITY.

"I hardly know an *intellectual* man, even, who is so broad and truly liberal that you can think aloud in his society. Most with whom you endeavour to talk soon come to a stand against some institution in which they appear to hold stock—that is some particular, not universal way of viewing things."

THOREAU.

"Do you persuade yourself that I respect you?"

"MEASURE FOR MEASURE."

Cultured gentility is one of the signs of the times. Snobbishness is a deep-seated vice of human beings, and a trait of the gregarious mammalia, with which the human snob, when he is more than ordinarily ignorant, disclaims relationship. When Darwin told people that their early progenitors were hairy and ape-like, with prehensile feet, great canine teeth, and tails equipped with the proper muscles, all the Respectables jeered at him, and said that they were "only a little lower than the angels," and that monkeys must have been fashioned as travesties of men. But though we have moved upwards,

"working out of the beast," Man still exhibits race prejudice, patriotic bias, and the low instinct of class exclusiveness. Perhaps at no period of our social evolution have we been more cultured, and yet more vulgar, than at the present time. Such a juxtaposition may appear to indicate that a little knowledge for the masses is not without its disadvantages as well as its blessing. The proletarian of the sixteenth century could not read nor write; but he was probably less vulgar than those among his descendants whose acquaintance with modern literature is restricted to the gutter library of cuts and snips and racing tips. Simple, merry Dick trolled "Old Rose"; flash 'Arry and his blatant mates hiccough the staccato of "Glorious Beer."

Contemporaneous with a widespread vulgarity of thought and a hideous banality of living, there is an immense development of culture. Nowadays it is the fashion to "go in" for "culture," and in society you must know, or affect to know, something about evolution, the higher criticism, Ibsen, Whistler's pictures, and Chippendale furniture. You may learn much about these, and be "smart" at the same time;

for smartness and culture go hand-in-hand to the "crushes" and "at homes," and are as brother and sister one to the other. To use a phrase from the vocabulary of culture-cum-smartness, you are "not in the running" if you have merely mastered the theory of the universal germ, and neglected to practise the skirt dance or the plantation song.

Once upon a time, the philosopher and the man of letters came out and was separate from amongst the crowd. He lived mostly in the seclusion of his library, which was neither good for his understanding nor his digestion. But he forewent the pomps of smart society, partly because smart society did not wish to be bored, and partly owing to his enlightened instinct of Bohemianism, which found wholesome gratification in the unostentatious amenities of the literary symposium, the forgathering with one or two of his craft at the historic "Cheshire Cheese" or the "Cock Tavern." He dressed himself with a certain careless distinction; he drank cider with Porson, and spent ambrosial nights in the fumes from churchwardens with genial Lamb, Hazlitt,

Godwin, Leigh Hunt, and Landor. These were men of culture who refused to hover on the fringe of a shallow, fashionable society, not because they were intellectual snobs, but because their pursuits were on a higher plane than the frivolities of Respectability.

Wordsworth dwelt remote among the hills; De Quincey led laborious days in the solitude of Mavis Bush; Shelley lived unknown of his neighbours at Marlow; and Landor, "a noble-looking old man, badly dressed in shabby snuff-clothes, a dirty old blue necktie and unstarched cotton shirt," lived chiefly aloof in Florence. None of these qualified themselves for lionisation in society. The arts of gentility are not compatible with the study of science and philosophy.

Ampère, the scientific investigator, went one day to dine with Madame Beauregard. His hands were stained by a drug which leaves its mark on the skin for several days. Poor Ampère! what did he in a company where externals count for all a man is worth? His hostess could not dine with one whose hands were soiled in the interest of posterity: "I promised not to return there before my hands were white. Of course,

I shall never enter the house again," wrote Ampère to his wife. And have we not read how Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds were mistaken by a finical lady for a pair of working men when she saw them conversing together?

But we have fallen upon different days. The philosopher has been lured from his den; the poets have come down from Parnassus to sport with the nymphs of Philistia, the intellectual rogue elephant has been tamed to "caper nimbly in my lady's chamber," and the recusant and the pariah sat down to table with the imposing dignitaries of the Church and State. It may be well on the whole, but these gracious concessions from the Philistine are not without their perils for the philosopher and the artist. Even the wisest of them cannot always escape the moral and mental deterioration that comes of being *au fait* in the whiffles and frothy small talk of drawing-rooms, the parlour tricks and pretty deportments; and the donning of a chimney-pot hat and a dress coat is often the first step on the downward career of the intellectual Have we not seen it? One season will transform the modest, single-hearted, plain-living artist or student into a vain,

insufferable, intellectual mountebank. A few months of interviewing, and "log-rolling," and posturing in Mayfair, and you change your ideas, stultify your conscience, and degenerate into a Respectable. It is almost inevitable. We are all sweetly human, and vanity is one of our prime characteristics. Most of us, also, as some critic of life observes, would rather be "the chief of a committee of four than the unknown benefactor of our species." An author of mediocre ability, possessing that quality of self-assertiveness known commonly as "side," can far outpace the shy genius in the race for public esteem. The brazen bumptiousness and supercilious disdain of the mere talent which lacks astute worldly wisdom are the components of the snobbishness that makes for social success. Society closes the door upon the needy philosopher in his threadbare garb; but it throws its portals wide to welcome the adept of claptrap, whose higher philosophy is the study of the main chance.

I do not applaud the intellectual exclusiveness with which some of the cultured attempt to keep their immaculate souls unspotted from the world. We want no Respectability of pedants and book-

worms. Erudition is worthy of the highest respect; but the erudite snob is imperfectly cultivated. He is frequently more ignorant of many important phases of life than the sheer illiterates whom he pities for a narrowness of judgment upon men. Who can gainsay Sir Thomas Browne, when he writes: "It is an unjust way of compute to magnify a weak head for some Latin abilities; and to under-value a solid judgment because he knows not the genealogy of Hector"? It is difficult to dissociate arrogance from ignorance, even when we know that the arrogant man is learned. Snobbishness is a mark of shallowness.

Undoubtedly, many men and women of genius have evinced the specific snobbery of culture. Shakspere, Jonson, Victor Hugo, and Turguenieff, are great figures that suggest exceptions to the rule. Carlyle is a bad case of playing to the Respectables; for, despite his loudly-proclaimed reverence for humanity, his vanity, like that of Antisthenes, peered through the rents in his cloak. In extolling the imposers of brute force in the community, the sage displayed a tendency to cajole the oppressing class, for whom

he had about as much real sympathy as the Southerner has for the negro race. He jeered at and snubbed his contemporary writers; he despised mere literary artists; he told a now eminent novelist that he was "ganging to the de'il by the very vulgarest road"; he described Lecky as "a willow-pattern sort o' man, voluble but harmless, a pure herbivorous, nay, mere graminivorous creature;" he called Landor a "wild man," and sighed "over the spectacle of the commonplace torn to rags;" Maurice was "uninteresting. . . . twisted, screwed, wiredrawn;" and it is said that the most he could say for George Meredith was that he was "nae fule." To a host of minor essayists, journalists, and literary hangers-on, Carlyle set that fashion of priggishness and snobbery that prevails so widely at the present time.

What a mighty and fearsome foe to knowledge is Academic Respectability. Beneath its sway the seats of learning become fusty abiding-places of mouldy pedantry. It posts its wary lackeys at every avenue of research to warn back adventurous explorers, with their theological or political red flags and notice boards. Academic Re-

spectability expelled Shelley. It frowns upon Bain, Francis Newman, and other bold investigators and scholars of modern times. It killed Socrates, persecuted Spinoza, insulted David Hume, sneered at Buckle, and derided Darwin. De Quincey tells us that he scarcely spoke to a soul while he was at Worcester College, Oxford. Was the pensive opium-eater thoroughly overawed or depressed by the Respectability of the classic city? Possibly those were the days of the genesis of the "Oxford manner," that supercilious drawling affectation of superior sapience which characterises the sons of *bourgeois* families at Alma Mater.

Let William Morris speak: "Oxford was beautiful even in the nineteenth century, when Oxford, and its less interesting sister, Cambridge, became definitely commercial. They (and especially Oxford) were the breeding places of a peculiar class of parasites, who called themselves cultivated people; they were, indeed, cynical enough, as the so-called educated classes of the day generally were; but they affected an exaggeration of cynicism, in order that they might be thought knowing and worldly-wise." ("News

from Nowhere.") Thomas Hardy, in describing the manners of Christminster,* writes in a similar strain of the system that has elbowed the proletariat off the pavements, to make room for the sons of millionaires.

Academic stubborn opposition to new and revolutionary theories of all kinds is one phase of the mental malady of Respectability. All hierarchies and autocracies have the sacrosanct seal of Respectability; they have a conventional reputation to maintain, and it is to their vital interest to fight innovating opinion. For instance, the French Academy refuses persistently to elect M. Zola, on the very plea of his literary unconventionality and virility. He writes for the thoughtful and wide-visioned, and not for the horde of shallow Respectables. Yet Zola is beyond doubt the greatest novelist of our age; and perhaps the only French novelist of his day who can count upon immortality. It is his greatness, his genius, that exclude him from the narrow coterie. "My position is simple," he writes. "Since there is an Academy in France, I ought to belong to it. I have stood for election,

* "Jude the Obscure."

and I cannot recognise anything wrong on my part in having done so. So long as I continue to stand, I am not beaten, therefore I will always stand." But Zola may rest well content; he has won greater fame and honour than the Academy could confer upon him.

Instance, again, the Respectable hostility to the evolutionary theory. Was the opposition entirely motived by a spirit of scientific scepticism and caution? Certainly not. The main attack was made by the army of Respectables, who became exceedingly angry with Charles Darwin because he calmly demolished a number of groundless suppositions as to the origin of life, the descent of man, and the development of the sense of morality. Your true conventionalist, confronted with a new and startling idea, is like the savage who lashes himself into a passion at the sight of a steamboat or some other mechanical invention. The savage wants to smash the machine and the man who made it.

Mr. Lawson Tait, the well-known physician, has stated that he suffered in social and professional life for his acceptance of the Darwinian

hypothesis. Mr. Tait writes: "'The Origin of Species' was published in 1859. I came across it in 1861—as a boy of 17—it captivated me, and took such a hold of me that I tried the application of its principle in every direction open to my youthful mind. In 1863, as president of the Hunterian Medical Society (the Society of University Students), I applied Darwin's doctrines in directions which brought upon me the expressed anger of the authorities, and my career as a University student was in danger of a premature ending. Not only was there not a single professor of the University of Edinburgh at that time who was other than actively hostile to Darwin's views, but the acceptance of them actually drove me from my native city, in 1866."

Such is a typical illustration of the mental corrosion induced by the insanity of Academic Respectability.

I am not tilting at Universities, but against Respectability in every guise. With the growth of power in the *bourgeois* class, the Universities have, to a large degree, degenerated from halls of knowledge into mere forcing beds of the disease of Respectability.

The case seems even worse in "free America."

Plutocracy has taken the colleges under its ægis, and knowledge has been cramped to suit the whims of millionaire patrons. Just as happened in the case of the academic professors who protested against slavery, so are they now threatened when they advocate new economic doctrines, which do not fit in with the ideas of big capitalists. Sensational light was thrown on this matter by a letter written by one of the professors of the Leland Strawford University of California, and given to the public by the chief of the Literary Bureau of the Democratic Bryan Party, though its language seems to suggest that its writer did not expect its publication. This professor states that college professors enjoy no freedom of expression on the money question. "I know," he says, "there are many who wish to champion national bi-metallism, but I am very sure if there were such, they would be compelled to surrender their present livelihoods." He cites by name several instances of instructors who have been placed under duresse for teaching views that are considered heterodox by the wealthy men who rule the Board of some of our principal colleges,

and rule them in orthodox obedience to the gospel of self-interest.*

The same writer informs us that for advocating the passage of a Bill by the Illinois State Legislature to give the City of Chicago the option of becoming the owner of a municipal gas plant, and for some other exhibitions of a spirit of economic freedom, Professor Bemis was dismissed from his position in the University of Chicago, an institution created and largely maintained by a great millionaire, part of whose fortune is in gas stock. Wisconsin has a university supported by the people of that State, and there learning has a chance to flourish. But wherever the influence of the patron is found, there progress is blocked by plutocracy.

"A most competent professor of political economy, in one of the greatest of our universities, allowing himself to become an advocate of the ownership and operation of our telegraphs by the Government, was compelled to give up his place by the influence of one of the trustees, who happened to be a large owner of telegraph stock. . . . The victorious trustee carries about with him in his pocket-book a little printed slip, containing the offensive views of the discharged professor, and it is his

* From article "Freedom in the American Colleges," in "Progressive Review," January, 1897.

pleasant habit to read this when occasion offers, to instructors or students who may, he thinks, need bracing up, and he accompanies the reading with cheering comments on the fate which befel the heretic who uttered such doctrines."

An important scientific school in America had been created and endowed by one of our "poor boys," become plutocrat. He was dissuaded with difficulty by the President from carrying out the idea which he proposed, that the teachers should be hired by the month, as were the clerks in his factories, so that they could be discharged whenever he wanted to do so!" You see, even in democratic nations, the trail of Respectability is over education.

CHAPTER VII.

PLUTOCRACY.

"Constant at church and change ; his gains were sure,
His givings rare, save farthings to the poor."

POPE. "Of the Use of Riches."

"Here you a muckworm of the town might see
At his dull desk, amid his ledgers stall'd,
Eat up with carking care."

THOMSON. "Castle of Indolence."

Everyone knows Pugsley, *the great Pugsley*, proprietor of Pugsley's Pure Piquant Pickles. You have seen his gracefully alliterative advertisements on the hoardings at the railway stations, and all down the Great Turnover Line, glaring at you in pastoral scenes, where Chloris led her lambkins in the pre-plutocratic days of "merrie England," and even obtruding their hideous drawing of the pickle bottles ("Ask for Pugsley's, Pure and Piquant") upon you in lonely mountain inns of the Grampians. There is no escaping the all-pervading Pugsley. Your grocer has foisted Pugsley's Pickles on you, and

you have had to taste them, willy-nilly. He had a good reason for sending you Pugsley's Pickles. The firm are able to undersell all other competitors in the drysaltery interest, because they pay low wages to their workpeople.

But, though you are familiar with the name of the Great Pugsley, and know the flavour of his relishes and condiments, you have never troubled to learn how the man made his huge business. I will tell you his history. It is very instructive.

Pugsley's father was a village grocer at Hookham Nooton. He sold butter and cheese and tea for forty years, and left his son £500 at his demise. Young Pugsley early developed shrewd commercial instincts. At school he retailed his father's sugar to the boys, making a clear halfpenny profit on each penny; and when he had made a little capital by this huckstering, he launched out into bigger trading ventures, such as the vending of knives and cricket bats, and cheap magic lanterns, till he became a kind of "Universal Provider" at the select academy for young gentlemen. This was good training for his after career of buying, and selling, and exploiting.

There is nothing like beginning these things when you are young.

At fifteen, Pugsley, junior, was installed behind the parental counter at Hookham Nooton, where he learned how to weigh tea with a bit of paper under the scale pan, and other recognised dodges of the trade, so that he soon became his father's right hand, and a great acquisition to the business. When Pugsley, senior, departed hence, his son took sole control of the shop. But the young man realised that he was born to be a great merchant, and not a petty trader in a remote village. One day he chanced upon an old book of practical recipes, which told you how to make ketchup and sauces, and, by dint of messing with vinegar and spices, he hit upon the famous blend that made his name as a sauce maker. Bottles of the stuff sold readily in the village and neighbouring small towns, for there is no denying that it was a tasty relish. Then came small wholesale orders, and trade began "to hum," as business slang has it. Five years later we find Pugsley the owner of a pickle factory in Spitalfields, and the employer of fifty hands, mostly girls and boys. Ten years after, his

pickles are used in every Respectable family in the kingdom, and their repute has reached America and the Colonies; and so, before the prime of life, Pugsley is a pursy citizen, with a fine house at Richmond, a horse and chaise, a housekeeper, maidservants, and a gardener and coachman—all the proper rewards of industry.

At thirty-six, Pugsley married money, and further extended his business. His wife "received" local snobs, and gave "at homes," attended by inferior celebrities and "all the people who are likely to be of use to us." At forty Pugsley was a Constitutional condidate for Diddleham, the hope of the Respectables, the cynosure of the hide-bound conventionalists in politics. You may remember that he was returned by the imposing majority of six. Now came the zenith of his fame. Pugsley's politics like his pickles, are notoriously piquant. He has voted against every democratic measure, and prated about "the natural leaders of the working class."

See him now, in his honoured old age, hated of his workpeople, envied by Respectables, despised by the county gentry and feared by almost

everyone, a millionaire to-day, with a seat in Clodshire, a house in Portland Terrace, a yacht at Brighton, and a deer forest in Inverness-shire. I have met his son, the Master of the Slowcomb Hounds, a good sort of Philistine, who would rather do his fellow-men a good turn than an ill one, but a terrible ignoramus and deadweight for all that; with far less real knowledge of men and books than my cobbler round the corner. There are three daughters. One of them, Miss Evelyn, is betrothed to Lord Durt, the young impoverished peer, who was lately earning thirty shillings a week as society reporter to the "Gad-about." I am glad for Durt. He has had a rough time, and Evelyn is an amiable, even hopeful specimen of the Respectable girl. She has lately talked about industrial questions, and I believe she is half ashamed already that papa has women in his employment earning nine shillings a week upon which to keep body and soul together.

Yes, it is with the sweat of women and children that Pugsley has become a plutocrat. His wife is the Patroness of the Refuge for the Fallen. How many of Pugsley's women have

been forced to supplement their wretched earnings by prostitution? Someone once put this question to the pickleman. "Really, Mrs. —," he said, "I am not responsible for the morals of my working people." But I say that it is such fellows as Pugsley who force girls to sell themselves in the street. I ask you, my Respectable sister, could you live yourself and help to support your widowed mother and two young children on a wage of seven shillings a week? I have known one of Pugsley's women workers try to do this till death came with its eternity of rest for that poor, semi-starved, aching body. To me it is a constant source of wonder, and a matter of profound respect for woman's moral courage that more of Pugsley's ill-paid women helpers do not walk the streets for hire.

O! Great Pugsley, I would that I could be certain of a day of reckoning betwixt you and an Almighty Judge! Sometimes, in dreams, I hear the tramp, tramp, of thousands of feet, and see the white faces of toilers gleam in the murk of a London night, a night of violent retribution. Must we wait for this? Must hands be stained with men's blood ere the rich will bestir them-

selves to render justice to the poor? I pray the fates that it may not be so! But everywhere, in the great cities, and out in the fields, I hear the murmur of deep, sullen discontent.

Think what such a man as Pugsley has wrought in the name of Respectability. He has systematically lied, cheated, and crushed the weaker to the wall. He has piled up wealth by defrauding the widow and the orphan of bare human rights, turning them into worse than slaves by his thrice-accursed lust for money. I have heard of old servants being deposed in his warehouse, and put into subordinate positions to make way for the young; of men dismissed for the expression of Liberal political opinions; of hands threatened with discharge for professing trades union principles; of fines wrung from hungry children for trivial offences; and of bullying and insult and injustices without number.

I hear my cut-and-dried economist calling me to account with his formulas and expositions. Ah! I have listened to them; I have read them; but they never have, and never will, persuade me that Pugsley, the plutocrat, does what is right

and humane and reasonable towards those who have built up his fortune, and bought his mansions and his yacht, and dowered his daughters. I know about competition, and the law of demand and supply, and I take my stand on sound social science. But no science that I have studied convinces me that this plutocracy and plunder and monopoly are good for anyone but the plutocrats and the plunderers. And not good for them, either, in any moral sense. Is it moral to kill the social affections? I say that the professional burglar is a model of virtue by the side of Pugsley. He does not pose as a Christian philanthropist and a friend of the people when he goes about his nefarious business. Pugsley, the great successful gambler, fines poor country louts for playing pitch and toss with halfpence. The next day he perpetrates a filthy fraud on 'Change. Shelley was right, the true ruffian of a community is not the cutpurse who knocks you down in the Gray's Inn Road, and gags you, while his accomplice grabs your watch and valuables, but the "Respectable man—the smooth, smiling villain whom all the City honours, whose very trade is lies and murder; who buys his daily bread

with the blood and tears of men." I want to know why the big thief, Pugsley, is made a peer, and the man who steals a handful of turnips is sent to the County gaol?

The other day, a labourer, out of work, wired a rabbit on Pugsley's estate, and went to prison for a week for the misdemeanour. But Pugsley annexed the very land that the rabbit was on, a good wide strip of it, too, which belonged to the people. I used to walk on that same ground, looking for the first primroses. Now I must ask Pugsley's permission before I dare set a foot there, on this property which I own in common with my neighbours! And you tell me that this sort of "law and order" is good for my morals.

I am glad that my ethical-cum-philosophical friend is not at my elbow just now, to suggest that I ought to be kind to Pugsley. Why, in the name of reason, am I to flatter and applaud this commercial gamester? I look upon him as a victim of morbid acquisitiveness induced by Respectability. Pugsley thinks he must keep up his reputation among the Respectables of his set, and to do this he is urged to plunder the poor. He is a dangerous maniac; he ought to be de-

tained and set to hard labour to cure him of his derangement.

The stupidest farce played by the Pugsleys is when one of the girls goes district visiting, and tells the wives of the peasants earning twelve shillings a week, that they "ought to put by for a rainy day." I wonder that the women can keep their patience with the ninny. If Miss Clara Pugsley were to use her atrophied brain for five minutes, she would know that no woman with a husband and five children to feed and clothe, and a rent of eighteenpence a week to pay, can save a farthing out of such wages. It is gross insolence of this over-fed, idle, ignorant girl to talk in this fashion to the poor. But this fatuous nonsense is preached all over the country every day in the week. Ladies call it "helping the poor to be thrifty," "elevating the workers," etc.

O, Great Pugsley, it is not envy of your possessions that makes me dip my pen in gall, though I know well that is what you will think should you read these words of mine. I would be well content with the income of your under-steward. You have measured human nature

with your little foot-rule, and come to the opinion that all men are naturally greedy vampires like yourself. Believe me, Pugsley, you are sadly wrong in this view. I know men and women who would not stain their fingers with your wretched blood-money for their own usage, though they would gladly employ it for the benefit of those from whom you filched it, drib and drab, by underpayment of their hard, dull toil.

I wish, how I wish in malignant moments, that I had assurance of a hereafter for Pugsley in a dark, noisome factory, where he would have to work for ten hours a day on skilly. The parson tells me that there is a mansion in the skies prepared for Pugsley. And another equally sumptuous residence for the more honest Bill Brown, the poacher? Why not?

London, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield—these are the paradises of the Pugsleys; they batten in the rechy air of these gambling centres. How do these dismal, over-crowded, smoke-blackened haunts of Respectability impress "the intelligent foreigner?" "Send a philosopher to London, but no poet," says Heine. "Everywhere we are

stared down on by wealth and Respectability, while, crammed away in retired lanes and damp alleys, poverty dwells, with her rags and her tears." Heine, like many another thinker, was struck by the wretchedness and poverty of London, hiding away behind the mansions of plutocrats and Respectables. He saw "gaunt hunger staring beseechingly at the rich merchant who hurries along, busy and jingling gold, or at the lazy lord who, like the surfeited god, rides by on his high horse, casting now and then an aristocratically indifferent glance at the mob below, as though they were swarming ants, or, at all events, a mass of baser beings, whose joys and sorrows have nothing in common with his feelings;" and the poet cried to poor Poverty, "Well art thou in the right when thou alliest thyself to vice and crime. Outlawed criminals often bear more humanity in their hearts than those cold, blameless citizens of virtue, in whose white hearts the power of evil is quenched, but also the power of good."

Mr. Grant White has written a book entitled "England Within and Without," a very pungent and witty delineation of the English character

from an American point of view. He tells us that the British Philistine is "perfect of his kind;" that "Philistinism pervades the whole society of Great Britain south of the Tweed." Mr. Grant says that this Philistinism is of late growth in England, a phenomenon of the last hundred and fifty years. We cannot find traces of it in the "spacious days," in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Ford, and Massinger, nor in all the comedies of Shakspere. Master Ford and Master Page, the townsmen of Windsor, are neither snobs nor Philistines. But now, in this wonderful nineteenth century, the Philistines are as obvious as the poor; they swarm and teem everywhere. The dense-minded middle-class man, rich, purse-proud, vulgar, incapable of apprehending anything beyond the range of his own personal experience, comes upon the stage. Enter Pugsley, with a capacious abdomen, a red beef face, set off with cropped side whiskers, a shiny pow, a big voice, and an imposing cough. "He is the butt, it is true, of the courtier and of the travelled man; nevertheless, he is represented as the type of a large class, and as one who is becoming a power in the land, and

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CHAPTER VIII.

VILLADOM.

"There is less inconvenience in being mad with the mad than by being wise by oneself."

DIDEROT.

"It is among the respectable classes of this vast and happy empire that the greatest profusion of snobs is to be found."

THACKERAY.

"I sojourned perforce for a long while in Villadom," says an enemy of Respectability; "and I came away with some of its froust about my person." You can't bide there without getting harm; but the worst of it is, we have no option, many of us; we have to live in Villadom at some time or another in our lives. Thackeray, Guy de Maupassant, George Gissing, and George Moore have given us some clever studies of the kind of folk who live in those genteel residences in the suburbs. Mr. Moore's picture of Ashbourne Crescent, in the last chapter of "A Drama in Muslin," is about the finest of the sort I have met with in fiction. It is so good a description of the

region that I am tempted beyond resistance to steal parts of it.

"In Ashbourne Crescent there is neither dissent nor Radicalism, but general aversion to all considerations which might disturb belief in all the routine of existence, in all its temporal and spiritual aspects, as it had come amongst them. The fathers and the brothers go to the City every day at nine, the young ladies play tennis, read novels, and beg to be taken to dances at the Kensington Town Hall. On Sunday the air is alive with the clanging of bells, and, in orderly procession, every family proceeds to church, the fathers in all the gravity of umbrellas and prayer-books, the matrons in silk mantles and clumsy, ready-made elastic sides; the girls in all the gaiety of their summer dresses, with lively bustles bobbing; the young men in frock-coats which show off their broad shoulders, as from time to time they pull their tawny moustaches. Each house keeps a cook and housemaid, and on Sunday afternoons, when the skies are flushed with sunset, and the outlines of this human warren grow harshly distinct—black lines upon pale red —these are seen walking arm-in-arm away towards a distant park with their young men. . . And that Ashbourne Crescent, with its bright brass knockers, its white-capped maidservants, and spotless oilcloths, will in the dim future pass away before some great tide of revolution that is now gathering strength far away, deep down and out of sight in the heart of a nation, is probable enough; but it is certainly now, in all its cheapness and vulgarity, more than anything else representative, though the length and breadth of the land be searched,

of the genius of Empire that has been glorious through the long tale that nine hundred years have to tell."

I have conceived of a suburban colony of houses where a man might live and be natural and healthy-minded among his neighbours; where he might, if he chose, walk about in cool, backwoods dress, a shirt, breeks, and wide-brimmed hat—or no hat—in hot weather, without inciting derision, or becoming a pariah. But Villadom cares nothing for naturalness, nor liberty of opinion and conduct; and, unconscious of the madness of its severe conventionality, it deems those insane who cultivate ideas and try to live up to them. What! is there one man in ten in this great sheep-pen who would like to be seen blacking his own boots or sweeping the snow from the front of his house? No, they prefer to ill-pay some man's daughter to do all their irksome and dirty work. What does Villadom read, talk of, and think upon? The fathers read the newspapers, the mothers and daughters peruse "John Halifax," and such like literature of the Pap-boat and Pumplighter sort; and the talk is of money, the neighbours, and the back-parlour window curtains and carpets—all good themes

enough in their season, but not the only things in life of vast importance. The denizens of Villadom tell you that they have their livings to earn, dinners to cook, and houses to control; therefore there is no time for cultivating their intellects, and developing their sense of the beautiful in nature and art. No time! It is the old plea of the men and women who squander hours in tittle-tattle and loafing. Gerald Massey, a bargeman's son, and a fag in a factory; Elihu Burritt, a blacksmith; Thomas Edward, a shoemaker; Walt Whitman, a compositor; Bradlaugh, a soldier, and afterwards a clerk; James Hosken, a postman, not to mention a hundred other hard-working men, found time to read, and think, and improve themselves. It is the *will*, and not the leisure, that is lacking in Villadom, the will to be something better than mere Respectables in the eyes of society.

The foppery and frippery of Villadom are miserable outlets for human energy. If this is the end of civilised beings, give me rather the wildest life of primitive barbarians, for they, at least, wish to learn higher arts of living. No past civilisation presents this picture of Philis-

tine apathy to the nobler interests of life. Karl Pearson says truly that the two most pitiful illustrations of our pseudo-civilisation may be seen in the main streets of the West End of London. In the afternoon you see crowds of idle, shallow women standing, rapt in the admiration of bits of ribbon in the windows of the drapery stores. A few hours later, when the shops are closed, another army of women parade the pavements, ogling and smirking in their nightly quest for the bread of prostitution. The "ladies" of the afternoon promenade are mostly the wives and daughters of Villadom. They do not know how largely responsible they are for that nocturnal orgy of the streets when they are snug in their luxurious drawing-rooms. It is the fetish-worship of Respectability that makes thousands of women redundant, drives some to the streets, and condemns others to withered celibacy. Men realise that the Respectable daughters of Villadom are luxuries that they cannot afford to maintain, in early life, at least; and the *demi-monde* know this, too. As Mr. W. R. Greg wrote: "While the *monde* has been deteriorating, the *demi-monde* has been improving; as the one has grown

stupider and costlier, the other has grown more attractive, more decorous, and more easy. The ladies *there* are now often as clever and amusing, usually more beautiful, and not infrequently (in external demeanour, at least,) as modest, as their rivals in more recognised society."

This writer, rightly or wrongly, affirms that the way to set things straight in this anomaly of polyandry for thousands of women, and celibacy for thousands of their sisters is by the respectable ladies emulating the manners, and attaining the charms of the hetæræ, in "cheerfulness and kindliness of demeanour," "economy of style," and "ease and simplicity."

I know the advanced women—some of them, at any rate—will tell me that men are not worth winning at this expense, and that they prefer to go their own ways alone. So be it. There is no coercion to matrimony for such as elect to remain in single independence. On the other hand, we have not yet killed the sexual attraction and the maternal instinct in all our emancipated women. And, as for the girls of Villadom, *they*, at all events, look upon marriage as their destiny. Then, I say, let them get rid of this spurious

virtue of Respectability, which costs so much to maintain, and is worth nothing after all their pains. Villadom exists principally for women. Bachelor men do not, as a rule, need domestic whim-whams and nick-nacks to make them happy in their "diggings." Villadom has been built and embellished for the fair sex; they reign almost supreme there, and it is their part to refine the atmosphere of their domain.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TYRANNY OF RESPECTABILITY.

"Men, and still more women, who lift themselves above the ordinary standard by their philosophical tastes and speculations, may indeed be accounted fortunate if they escape calumny or obloquy from general society."

W. CAREW HAZLITT.

"Mankind is an ass, who kicks those who endeavour to take off his panniers," says a Spanish proverb. When we are very young and enthusiastic about the great part we mean to play in the reformation of society, we work ourselves into fearful furies of indignation with those who have persecuted innovators in all ages. Later in life we learn that the persecutor is more of an ass than a villain; and the more we study humanity, not forgetting our own human nature, the more are we persuaded that this is the right scientific view to take. While we had the taint of Respectability in us (and very few men and women are born without it), we were disposed sometimes to do some of this asinine kicking upon those

whom we considered dangers to society. We did not pause to think whether they wished to help us by removing the packs from our galled backs; but, as soon as a Samaritan approached us with kindly intent, we let fly our heels and attacked him. The fact is, as Thoreau says, there are really very few men, even of the Non-Respectables, without some trace of Respectable prejudice. Let us, therefore, be as tolerant as possible towards the misguided Respectables who brutally maltreat their would-be benefactors. Perhaps you have never thrown flints at an itinerant evangelist, nor hustled a Socialist in the parks; nevertheless, you have persecuted in some shape or form at one time of your life. Too lazy by nature to inquire into a novel social doctrine, or to dispassionately examine a new theory of morals, you have misunderstood and denounced the promulgators and theorists. This is very often the outcome of your Respectability, and a purely emotional manifestation of prejudice against something that you have not tried to understand. Thus persecution begins. If you have a large element of the savage in you, your opposition will take the form of actual physical

violence and scurrilous abuse; if you are moderately humane and intelligent, you will merely scorn and deride the heretic. Your blood seethes when you read of the persecution of martyrs. Take heed of yourself that you do not evince the malevolent spirit that impels men to denounce others unheard, at the first suggestion of heterodox opinion.

Priestley, a Unitarian minister, of Birmingham, experimented in chemistry, and discovered oxygen, alone and entirely unassisted, in a laboratory fitted up at his own expense. The world owes much to this industrious man of science. But the human nature that killed Christ and Bruno, hated Priestley because he tried to convey new truths. A mob of fanatical Respectables burned down his house, and destroyed all his books, notes, and apparatus, and drove him from his native land.

Home, the author of the tragedy of "Douglas," was persecuted and turned out of the ministry by Scotch Respectables for writing a play to amuse and instruct his fellow men; and Dr. Alexander Carlyle was threatened with a prosecution for standing by Home, his friend. Reli-

gious Respectability persecuted the devout Hannah More for instructing the children of the poor. Moneyed Respectability hanged John Brown, mobbed Theodore Parker, and threatened to shoot Ernestine Rose for endeavouring to free negro slaves. Shelley, one of the humanest souls who ever lived, was driven from Eton by respectable young cads, expelled from Oxford by Respectability, and banished to another country. Byron, who taught men, by brave precept and example to love liberty, was reviled, slandered, and forced to live abroad. Walt Whitman, for showing men the beauty and purity of the reproductive function, degraded and assailed by Respectability, was "greeted with howls of execration." Respectability has cursed Ibsen, Zola, and Björnson, three mighty forces for righteousness in Europe. Charles Bradlaugh, who devoted his life to the service of man, was bitterly assailed and vilely aspersed by his contemporary Respectables. Respectable human nature kicks everyone who sets himself to benefit humanity. The history of this moral pest and mental blight abounds with instances of its venomous effect upon men's hearts and minds.

"I can bear it no longer," cries Thackeray, "this diabolical invention of gentility which kills natural kindliness and honest friendship. Proper pride, indeed! Rank and precedence, forsooth! The table of ranks and degrees is a lie, and should be flung into the fire. Organise rank and precedence! that was well for the masters of ceremonies of former ages. Come forward, some great marshal, and organise equality in society, and your rod shall swallow up all the juggling old court 'goldsticks.'" Carlyle calls England "the wealthiest and worst instructed of European nations." Respectability piles up money, accumulates vast stores of material products, and starves men's minds in the process. It tyrannises in every province of ethics, science, art, literature, and politics, laying continually on our shoulders burdens grievous to bear. You can scarcely move without coming into collision with Respectability; you are expected to eat, drink, dress, think, marry, and be buried in accordance with its canon. The Respectables of the Exchange will snub and insult an independent-minded man who ventures within the shoddy circle without a chimney-pot hat. I have

heard this stupid tyranny of majorities defended as a safeguard of decency and order. What! these attempts to stamp out individuality of character promote social progress? This is an odd way of reasoning. But the Respectable doesn't reason; he follows the crowd mechanically.

You have only to give the Respectables plenty of rope, and they will strangle every effort of advance. They form societies for suppressing this thing and harrying that, with their wary scouts prowling in every direction; they try to "rob the poor man of his beer," while they gorge themselves with fat meats; they fought tooth and nail against the Sunday opening of museums and picture-galleries; they prosecuted Mr. Vizetelly for selling translations of Zola's novels; they oppose amelioration of our absurd, cruel, and ineffective prison system; they ban the teaching of physiological morality in sex matters; and they put hobbles and blinkers on women.

I have no especial veneration for Lord Beaconsfield as a politician, but I admire him for his unconventionality. How many young men possess the pluck to appear at a dinner party in green velvet trousers, a canary-coloured waistcoat, low

shoes with silver buckles, lace at their wrists, and their hair in ringlets? On another occasion, Disraeli turned up at a diocesan gathering at Oxford clad in a black velveteen shooting jacket, with a wideawake hat. A Respectable booby, writing the other day to a Liberal newspaper, referred to these eccentricities as though they were vices in a man, instead of recognising that such flaunting of a dull, drab Respectability, betokened courage and individuality. Immediately you dress in accordance with your own taste, instead of in the mufti of convention, you are dubbed a mountebank and a posturer. Of course, after these aberrations of deportment and form, there is not a good word to be said for Dizzy, only vehement abuse and denunciation. Yet the same Radical Respectable knew perfectly well, when he sat down to write that diatribe, that many of his class affect peculiarities of dress.

CHAPTER X.

RESPECTABLE CIVILISATION AND AFTER.

"I announce a life that shall be copious, vehement, spiritual, bold."
WALT WHITMAN.

It is the boast of the ordinary patriotic Briton that he lives in a highly civilised country. During his tutelage, he learns that climate, or insularity of position on the face of the globe, or the system of monarchy, or the Bible, has, or have, combined or separately, made England the foremost nation on earth. In later life he is sometimes prone to exclaim against our "advanced civilisation," and even to go to the extreme of asserting that we could well dispense with much of it. The latter-day Anglo-Saxon, who thinks without thought, has for himself a very clear and satisfying idea of civilisation. Emerson, on the other hand, remarks that "nobody has attempted a definition of civilisation," and that "we usually suggest it by negations;"

and he adduces instances of people lacking an alphabet, iron, and abstract thought. Thus, when we ask for an explanation of the term Civilisation, we usually hear an enumeration of the constituents of a state of primal savagery, and are then possibly referred to the material products, money, and Gatling guns of a nation for signs of its civilisation.

It is then much simpler for the majority to formulate intrinsic barbarism than to define refinement, and to delineate a reliable ideal of Civilisation. They are conscious that much, if not most of that which they would designate civilised could, upon close examination, be proved to be barbaric. Their easy exposition will not withstand keen scientific scrutiny; and a definition which will not stand this test is merely a stumbling-block in the way of inquiry. A member of a reputedly cultured community or class naturally resents attack upon those views and customs which in his estimate denote civilisation, and are of its very essence. If he is a pious Englishman, he will probably confess that in the matter of faith the people of Eastern countries are barbaric, while he fails to discern

the trail of barbarity in his own creed and ritual. In like manner, a Philistine aristocrat will scarcely accede that there is barely one degree of coarseness betwixt his pleasures and those of the illiterate proletarian, who, in his turn, persuades himself that he is more intelligent and decent than his compeers of another land.

Yet the truth is that a very small number of the inhabitants of these isles can be justly labelled civilised. We must search, as it were, in the mode of Diogenes for "the highly organised man, brought to supreme delicacy of sentiment, as in practical power, religion, liberty, sense of honour and taste," who stands for Emerson's type of civilised humanity. That such examples are not unknown at this stage is as certain as the fact that many more are in the process of evolution. And although savagery in idea and practice confronts us this way and that in each scale of society, we shall do ill if we approach the study of modern barbarism in a vein of mocking pessimism. It is also necessary that a lively faith in the evolutionary principle applied to human nature should be tempered by a look behind while our hopes are young.

Slowly and painfully are we "working out the beast," slowly and painfully must we climb the stages till we cease to obey the blind dictates of instinctive impulse and to base our codes on the reigning opinions of the irrational mass. It is hardly needful to reiterate even one of the preliminary conclusions of all philosophers and humanists to prove that most men have no reasoned views upon the conduct of life. Seneca says that "the common sort find it easier to believe than to judge, and content themselves with what is usual, never examining whether it be good or no. By the common sort is intended the man of title as well as the clouted shoe." The veracity of Swift's aphorism that most men have as much turn for flying as for thinking, and of Carlyle's laconic "mostly fools," is unquestioned.

It is therefore no unsupported postulate that the larger part of civilised people always tend to lead barbaric lives, and that what each class is apt to accept as an approximation to a complete civilisation is a very inchoate form of that truer culture urged upon society by individualist reformers in each successive age. A very slight examination of the thought and pursuits of what is called the highest class in our existing social

scale will serve to demonstrate the prevalence of barbarism. For there, as in the lower circles, we find the lines of apathy, vulgarity, and animalism graven on patrician faces, and proclaimed in the talk of the dinner-table, the smoking-room, and the covert-side. Obviously, all our peers are not ultra-barbarians; neither are all our bargees and coalheavers savages. Yet the dominant tone is just as often low and inane in the mansion as in the tenement, and with much less to offer in its extenuation. Millions toil and ache, and are vulgarised in order that a coterie of hereditary lords and titled parvenus shall enjoy the leisure which they mainly devote to frivolity and the killing of the æons of time. Upon these, the intimates of monarchs, the protectors of the sacred pheasant, the distributors of largess, a barbaric populace alternately lavishes its affection and its abuse. So long as the baron flings his groats to the churls, all is peace in vassaldom; but when rents are racked, game laws enforced to their utmost limits, and the dice rattled in the hall, the voice of the people is upraised in tumult, and the virtuous artizan, clinking his silver winnings on the way from the racecourse, thanks

heaven he is not as these nobles are, gamblers, adulterers, and oppressors of the widow and the orphan.

Set a barbarian to lash a barbarian if you wish to see injustice done. The fact is that, being barbarous, we first allow an accident of birth to raise a man to a position of power, and then run atilt at our shoddy dignities because the power tends to impede general well-being. Worth of mind is the one qualification for esteem, a trite enough dictum in the mouths of those who persistently ignore its truth. But the time must come when the aristocracy of character will be the only recognised aristocracy in civilised nations.

I think that if one should suggest that it is right to hate the members of our "bloated aristocracy," he is no less absurd than those who fawn around the lackeys of a court. Our noble lords are not of one type, as our common people are not of one cast, though in many rude examples of nobility we can trace the basic elements of ruffianism, and see the bestial fruits thereof. What most concerns us is the question whether a society that grants titles to its success-

ful money-grabbers is clean-purged of its antique barbarism. An academical diploma conferred upon a teacher of the arts or sciences is possibly one means by which the respectful heed of the uncultured is secured for new doctrine. For the one who appends certain characters to his signature will be held in esteem by the many as a man worth hearing. Even in the matter of degrees given to scholars of distinction, we too often discover that such award fosters moral and mental deterioration, and that it narrows and mars the career of thinkers who are elevated to a throne of authority. Our laureates must need be eminently wary in their main theories, though they may pipe an undernote of revolt in the sequestered grove, to ease their souls of the sting of the stultifying penalty of vulgar rank. Yes, titles of all kinds seem to have a tendency to degrade; and the sun of courtly favour often withers the real and aids the growth of the spurious nobility. "Brave old Samuel," ever a Respectable in leading sentiments, was more so when he took a dole from the palace. There is little hope for the amendment of the semi-barbaric prophet when he is taken from the wilder-

ness and thrust into a position only tenurable by wily compromise with the Respectabilities.

Very engrossing is the study of Respectability in high places. "These be the men we are told to look up to,' said a tattered plebeian, whose eyes had been blasted by the hunting magistrate who was riding on other men's land. But that we do "look up to" our rich, idle folk with an avid awe is undoubted. Few persons in a town are especially interested in hearing that Mr. Herbert Spencer is there on a visit; but we are most of us anxious to shake hands with a prize-fighter, or the "Jubilee Plunger," or to take tea with a millionaire's wife. We look up to or hunt after such because they have vulgar notoriety or money, and we are not concerned to know how they came by their popularity and their cash, and whether they deserve either, and make a good use of their power. Were it not for the few civilised beings who dare to be considered odd, this odious admiration of trivial character and empty claims would mean a ripening to the decay of society. Involuntarily, the civilised make the ways of barbarity easy to thousands, for they absolve the lethargic from the exertion of severe thinking.

The paradise towards which the *bourgeoisie* strive is not the leisure to refine the mind, but the opportunity to vie with the more commonplace section of the upper class in dissipation. The labourer who resents the lordling's contumely, and indicts him for living a lazy life, may only work when he is starving, and perhaps not then. His ideal may rise no higher than perpetual beer and ninepins, while the squire craves no higher satisfaction in life than hunting six days a week, and champagne, billiards, and the sporting papers on Sunday. The evil is in the setting up of a barbaric aim of life in all classes. Our greatest ideals are the commercial and the voluptuous The eternal pursuit of the frivolous, which makes up the chief part of what is foolishly termed "high life," and the sordid middle-class struggle to amass money, are accepted by the shallow as tokens of our progress in civilisation. We are rich and luxurious; we are therefore far above the savage. Yet how far? Our leisured and affluent have for the greater number returned to the employment of a pre-pastoral epoch. Look at the lives of thousands of English gentlemen. Truer bar-

barians never existed of old than many of those whose whole thought, energy, and wealth are given up to sport. Many of them are restless nomads, ever hurrying from one quarter of the globe to another in search of fresh game to kill. I do not underrate the need for the development of the physical man, nor ignore the value of sports rightly comprehended as a means to the end of training and recreating the body. But what shall be said of that multitude of our countrymen who live to amuse themselves in such primitive fashion? It is these who waste their powers, and barbarise the vulgar by the force of ill example.

Let us not wonder that, in bygone days, a gaping peasantry, with quaint uncouth notions of what constituted an efficient mouthpiece of their wants, yelled at the hustings for the return of those who rode straight, and could pummel the best man of the mob in a brace of rounds. Of such order are still the credentials in some of the Pagan constituencies, where the beer-steeped intelligence pleads the election of "an old-fashioned sort and a thorough sportsman."

We are still rearing these rude types in our

public schools and universities, and for these we laudably reserve the chief places on the senate, on justiciary benches, and in local boards. Despite their educational chances and social opportunities, these are surely among the retrograde, with their *argot* culled from the racing journals, their strange drawling pronunciation of the English tongue, their points of breeding, their caddish *hauteur*, their rampant John Bullisms, and their innate aversion to thought and earnestness. "The fop of Charles's time," says Leslie, in Mr. Mallock's "New Republic," "aimed at seeming a wit and a scholar. The fop of ours aims at being a fool and a dunce."

Quitting this strange horde, let us descend to the mart for an examination of the Commercial Ideal. No one denies that for a nation of shopkeepers we have done great things in the world's history. In a very large measure we are civilised by the shop, and it is only when the shop absorbs the best of us, mental and physical, that commercial activity tends to retard progress. Provide that a man's moral sense and intellect are not warped or unexercised in the making of money, and there is nothing degrading, but the opposite,

in his desire to succeed commercially. But in the fierceness of competition in an over-populated country, cruel barbarity and detestable meanness and cunning arise. And not only these, but the curse of intellectual and æsthetic atrophy lights upon the host. Out of this undue stress is developed a tendency to sordid living, a preference for the lower gratifications of life. Yet need money-getting always degrade the people? Will the prosperous business career of the future be alone compatible with a low standard of thought, and a corrupt canon of commercial morals?

"Life without industry is guilt; industry without art is brutality." Now, in the push and drive of industry at the close of this century it is as hard for myriads to keep the soul alive, as it is for many thousands to find food for the body. The trader who makes Mammon his idol, who thinks money, and spends his wealth irrationally, brutalises life. But for the others, let us rather pity and try to amend the condition of those who cannot, in plain terms, "leave the shop." There are strong-minded and somewhat exceptional tradesmen who can shake off the dust of the warehouse, and spend the hours of freedom in the

cultivation of the intellect. There are men of business who do excellent work in art and science, while their jaded associates are satisfying their purely animal wants. The question is—Can a man live the higher life, and *succeed* in the worldly meaning of prosperity? Men do not grow money by storing the brain with knowledge, and the merchant who ponders upon a phase of evolution, or murmurs a rhythm of Tennyson while he is at the ledger, will most probably be an indifferent money-maker. Lamb's *Good Clerk*, you will remember, "gets on" because his first aim is to be a good piece of mechanism. It is a grievous reflection that zeal for the desk should eat up the brain and better part of a good man, and leave him a machine. The expert clerk is as valuable as the clever author or the great painter; but the trouble is that while the trader is making himself efficient as a trader, he is frequently neglecting his mind, narrowing his social judgments, and tending backwards.

Is there no escape from a seemingly invincible fate that restricts the thought and energy of the million to the bare affairs of the shop? It does almost seem at first that there is none. What we have to determine is whether we shall aid the

production of mediocre shopkeepers, who will desire to live cultured lives, while they devote a due share of thought to the shop, or whether we shall continue to rear a class who place business first and culture last, or practically without their scheme of life. For every sociologist this is a great problem. Speaking out of my own prejudice, I would rather live in a country of moderately prosperous men, who read, and speculated, and had aspirations for something higher than lucre, than in the land where the mass were rich and unintellectual.

There is an economic aspect of the alternatives. Art thrives where there is wealth; but money does not of necessity make good art. At present two formidable hindrances stand in the way of developing culture—over-population, and a passion for ostentation. Regulate the reproductive faculty, and save the potential slave of industrialism from a struggle that waxes keener yearly. This must be done in the individual and national interest, to the gradual diminishment of abject poverty and the lessening of the awful strain in the congested centres. Allied with this teaching, there should be a wide inculcation of the value of

a refined simplicity of material life, a substitution of high-thinking for mere barbarous display in living. These were the leading precepts of John Stuart Mill to an unheedful generation; but I, for one, take courage in the view that this will become the creed of many as we advance in the art of living. In *Liberty*, Mill writes:

"The superior worth of simplicity of life, the enervating and demoralising effects of the trammels and hypocrisies of artificial society, are ideas which have never been entirely absent from cultivated minds since Rousseau wrote; and they will in time produce their due effect, though at present needing to be asserted by deeds, for words, on this subject, have nearly exhausted their power."

The way of the civiliser is hard. If the men and women of ideals and broad sympathies go, as Mills enjoins, into Barbaria and Philistia as apostles, they must be prepared to receive the hurts of primitive weapons. Missionaries are not welcomed with barbaric shouts of glee when they land to subvert ancient faiths. Neither are apostles of righteousness and sweetness and light beloved of our children of darkness in Belgravia and Bloomsbury. But as Mr. Hamerton asks in his "Intellectual Life": "Are the Philistines to have all the talk to themselves for ever; are

they to rehearse their stupid old platitudes without the least fear of contradiction? How long, O Lord, how long?" Yet, let your apostle be the quintessence of tact and humility, he will not escape slander, odium, and contempt when he essays to contradict the ancient platitudes. Broach boldly any subject, from religion to corset-wearing, in the drawing-room at Bloomsbury, or in the back parlour at Lambeth, and you will have to contend against stubborn apathy. To cultivate eccentricity of opinion and conduct for the purpose of evoking the curiosity of the languid Respectables, is a form of insanity which no one will suppose I am advocating as an effort towards civilisation. But social danger is always to be apprehended from conventionality that is stagnantly content with the existing order, and has not the desire nor energy to advance. It is, then, the onerous duty of a thoughtful member of the respectable classes to awaken his relatives or associates from a blank contentment with mere animal well-being and trivial aims. He must not shrink from the burden because it is the habit of unthinking persons to believe that the conclusions of sounder brains have been gained

by the same meagre thinking as their own flimsy theories, or that his wrought-out views are only crotchets advanced to flatter his egoism. For by those who shirk deep thinking, intellectual seriousness in others is merely regarded as a more or less peculiar temperamental trait. They do not know that the eternal voluntary martyrdom of thinkers is their salvation. They are unaware that the good and the earnest toil daily in order that the evil and the frivolous may be preserved to reap the reward of toilsome thought, in which the apathetic have had no share, and for which they have little praise. Reflect upon what Darwin has done for morality, science, and art, and then mark the mean ingratitude and ignorant misrepresentation of some of those who are now being made whole by his sane science. Will the Respectables always crucify their social redeemers?

Not wholly encouraging is the investigation of barbarism in our industrial and proletarian classes. Yet perhaps, if there is one party above another that appears to be progressing rapidly towards a higher civilisation, it is the operative. When one thinks of what the working class has

done, with its lack of advantage in the past, and its scant opportunity in the present, the progress is one of the most wonderful and hopeful omens of modern times. It is inevitable that the acquisition of a little knowledge should bear some ill fruit among the sound; but the humanising influences of education far exceed in their proved result the expectation of the early pioneers of a noble movement. Much has been done, and much remains to be accomplished, in the work of constructing the foundations and superstructure of an ultimate democratic civilisation. Whitman and Ibsen, latter-day prophets of sound social foresight, predicted at the outset of their careers that in the fibre and stuff of a cultured democracy lies our hope.

Undoubtedly, the moral tone of the industrial class is growing higher yearly. The rough hand of the artisan has fashioned much of our civilisation, and his hard, calculating intelligence will have a larger share in the government of the near future. I confess that it thrills me to hear that a set of miners in the North have begged the custodian of a public library to provide them with Mr. Meredith's fine but "difficult" novels.

Again, we should rejoice to learn that a factory worker, who has taught himself to read at the age of forty, is studying Mr. Spencer's "First Principles."

As I have before tried to show, the neglect of civilising thought and study is not voluntary in the case of many busy men and women. It is largely an outcome of complex commercial rivalry and overpressure that thousands should not share in the higher refinements of civilisation, and that science should be outside their rule of life instead of at the bottom of it. Thoreau speaks of the best part of the husbandman being ploughed into the soil for compost; and the figure represents the case for legions of toilers. Mr. Ruskin is among the oracles when he announces that "the final outcome of all wealth is the producing as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, and happy-hearted human creatures." Perhaps so; but for the nonce, we mostly plod on in that "dim-eyed and narrow-chested state of being," which we are wont to describe as "getting on in the world."

It is a great thing, this educational advance of the tool-skilled. Yet there is much to be done.

It is needless to rehearse the manifold savage characteristics, the mob frenzies, and the low pleasures of many of the working class—imperfections which all of us exhibit either in like kind or with faint difference. We forget that a mechanic who indulges in a weekly debauch, and sometimes beats a constable, has his counterpart in those who call themselves superior. Ruffianism, brutality, and gross sensuality are not restricted to one class. English epicurism is mostly of the lower kind in every rank. The uncivilised of the upper class spend the larger part of their incomes upon dishes and drinks; the coarse of the labouring class expend nearly half their wages on beer. Our sensuousness trends in the direction of sensuality. We pride ourselves that we are able to consume quantities of flesh, and we apotheosise John Barleycorn with Shakspere.

Very sombre is the spectacle of the life that bruises the million. To one who walks the streets observantly on public holidays, the white faces and worn bodies of his toiling brothers tell of dull, grinding lives. See the poor mercantile clerks and the shopmen, the genteel drudges, the

indispensable factors of wealth which they will never share. Well does Guy de Maupassant picture the type:

"With sallow faces and twisted bodies, and one of their shoulders a little forced up by perpetual bending at work over a table . . . they all belonged to the army of poor threadbare devils who vegetate frugally in a mean little plaster-house, with a flower bed for a garden."

How can we inveigh against these tired workers for the drowsy occupation of their few leisure hours? What is chiefly at fault is the crushing system that leaves so little time for expansion of the mind and the sympathies, the ideal that shapes the many to this level cast. Mr. Grant White gives a grimly sardonic sketch of a London shopkeeping pair in his "England Without and Within." He tells of faces that had probably "once expressed some of the vivacity of youth; but this had passed away, and nothing, no trace of thought or feeling, had come into its place—only fat; a greasy witness of content." But there is more pathos than humour in this study from lower middle-class life. Were there not originally the germs of ideas, imagination, and emotion, in these unfortunate contented

souls? Are such doomed to take no thought for higher things than bread-getting and eating, and will their minds for ever starve on the Bethel hymn and the newspaper?

More pitiful and tragic is the state of the lowest, the lapsed, the untameable of the slums. "Our society," says M. Taine, "is a fine edifice, but in the lowest story what a sink of impurity. . . . It seems to me that the evil and the good are greater here than in France." The law cannot cure inherent propensities to evil doing, and pious philanthropy can merely patch a rotten vestment; but scientific criminologists will eventually probe to the root. Too long have we relied upon the gaoler and the priest. We are learning now that congenital crime is a subject for the physiologist and the mental pathologist. So, too, with the plague of chronic destitution, the prime infamy of pseudo-civilisation. Instinctive barbaric pity urges liberal almsgiving; but the beautiful emotion of sympathy needs as much control in its gratification as the purely animal appetites. We shall awake soon to the truth that it is our selfish Respectability that must be fought with the weapons of a new

economic science, based upon righteousness. We should strive to destroy the sources of hopeless want, as we endeavour to exterminate disease microbes in the body.

Are these the visions of Utopianism? No; for when we consider what modern science has done in its infancy, we may surely reckon upon greater victory in days now dawning. To support this inspiring creed of science we do not need to fabricate evidences out of improbability, conjecture, and fallacy; for the proofs are plain and convincing, and will survive the severest criticism. Truly, if we make moan one day for the tenacity of unreason in the human brain, we may rejoice on the morrow in the thought that never in history has the outlook been brighter.

It is too evident that thousands who can no longer be satisfied with the guesses of primitive barbarians concerning man's origin and destiny still cover their inner convictions with the cloak of Respectability, and endeavour to seem that which they are not. Honesty will thrive with the wane of Respectability.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

"Respect is often paid in proportion as it is claimed."

DR. JOHNSON.

Respectable reader, you are perchance by this time partly inclined to at least agree that this disease of yours may be harmful to yourself and to others. I have not minced my words in discussing the unpleasant symptoms of your ailment. You are a prey to hallucinations, and it behoved me, as a judicious physician, to jeer at your fancies and to deride your dreads. I have endeavoured to convince you that Respectability is anti-social, improgressive, and often cruel. You cannot deny that the world's greatest moral worthies have been the Non-Respectables, the Unconventionalists, the enlightened Eccentrics. They have all deviated in some particular, or in many ways, from the ordinary standards and customs of the majority. In many instances they have been accounted immoral, but that has not

deterred them, because new morality has always been deemed immorality by the Respectables. Wesley, for example, thought it immoral to doubt the existence of witches. Yet, who to-day but the most degraded peasants of the wild hills believes in witches? Mr. Gladstone considers divorce immoral; but those who differ from him may be counted in millions. They are the adherents of a new morality, more reasonable, just, and humane than the old which has passed away.

Therefore, to make progress we are compelled to defy Respectability, and to outrage propriety. But that does not mean that we are to become ruthless Vandals, taking delight in destroying everything that is old. Far from it. We must pull down that idol Respectability from its throne, and set up some worthier object of veneration in its place. True worth and integrity of character can have no alliance with intellectual insincerity and social hypocrisy. We need more brave-hearted men and women, with the courage of their opinions, more heterodox thinkers, more consistent heretics to stand solidly together in a great attack on the shams and falsehoods that constitute Respectability.

Our children must be taught to use their brains, so that when they grow up they will not allow their little corner of the world to rule their lives and make them cowardly and deceitful. The words of the Knight in "Pericles" should be taught to boys: "*We are gentlemen that neither in our hearts nor outward eyes envy the great, nor do the low despise.*" Education must be freed from the restrictions and hindrances of Respectability, and made catholic, comprehensive, and equal for both sexes.

The canker has eaten too long at the heart of our great nation. Its ravages, if unchecked, will ultimately destroy our prestige, and we shall fall as Babylon, Rome, and Greece have fallen. Our social affections are blighted and chilled by this fell disease, our emotions are shrivelled, our national virility enfeebled. Colonies in their youth offer us a good illustration of the rapid progress of a people who have abandoned the cant of Respectability. In such communities men and women work for the commonweal, on a fraternal basis, with no heed to rank and precedence, and it is in these societies that individualism, independence, and unconventionality have full

play and outlet. Only at a later stage does the blight of Respectability descend upon the people of a new country, as we see it now in America, and, to a certain extent in Australia and Canada, where the *bourgeoisie* have established themselves and infected the populace with their disease. "This diabolical invention of gentility,'" as Thackeray terms it, is disintegrating society in England, slowly and surely. It is not foreign aggression, nor anarchy within, that we should most fear, but the insidious virus of the disease that is sapping our vitals.

It is the middle-men of the middle class who chiefly spread the contagion and transmit it to posterity. Antiquated political economists tell us that the middleman is useful to everyone, and that the man who gambles with other folk's money is a benefactor. There was a time when trade meant a handicraft; now it is a term for gambling with articles made by ill-rewarded workers. And the man who lives by this system of dealing expects the farmer, the miner, and craftsmen to doff their caps to him, and call him gentleman. "Since every Jack became a gentleman, there's many a gentle person made a Jack,"

says Shakspere. No one with a clear gaze on the future can delude himself that the middleman is a permanent institution, to be preserved and commended. His respectability, without dwelling upon his economic *raison d'être*, has made him the contempt of the upper class and the detestation of the working population. He has made himself king of provincial towns, censor of morals, and patron of the arts; and the mob has let him gain the upper hand, looking on with mouths agape at his cleverness. Respectability in its worst forms will last as long as the *bourgeoisie* possess this power over the masses.

I leave it to Anarchists, Socialists, Individualist, Tories, and the rest to settle whether the shoddy god, Respectability, is to reign despotically over England.

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PSEUDO-PHILOSOPHY

AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

By HUGH MORTIMER CECIL.

An Irrational Trio : Kidd, Drummond, Balfour.

A vigorous refutation of the well-known Pseudo-Philosophical Works, *Social Evolution* (Kidd), *The Ascent of Man* (Drummond), and *The Foundations of Belief* (Balfour), showing the absurdity of the methods adopted on the one hand, and the insincerity of these Pseudo-Philosophers on the other.

The Academy, APRIL 17, 1897 :

Mr. Hugh Mortimer Cecil will have none of this legerdemain; the flank of the rationalist position shall not be so turned if his vigilance can frustrate the manœuvre; and with a pen steeped in sulphuric acid, he has set out to confute these writers one by one.

. . . . He is one who must be reckoned with as a clear thinker, a cogent reasoner, a lucid and accomplished writer. . .

It is impossible, in the space at our disposal, to consider at large Mr. Cecil's criticism of "Foundations of Belief." It is a very serious and capable attack which will have to be reckoned with. Especially damaging is the criticism of Mr. Balfour's theory of authority. That argument can be employed with effect

only by one religious body, and it is not that body of which Mr. Balfour is a member. And here we venture to suggest to Mr. Cecil that it would be well were he to find out, before the issue of a second edition,, the meaning of the Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception, to which he more than once alludes; he appears to be under the impression that the phrase is equivalent to parthenogenesis.

The New Saturday Review, APRIL 17, 1897 :

The book is only one of many evidences of the fact that it is quite time the theologians recognised the real danger of their position, and sent into the lists stronger champions than those we have been writing about. It is little to the credit of the theological leaders that, after first condemning Darwin and vilifying some of his supporters, they should adopt his teaching only to misrepresent it, and to make a sophistical use of that misrepresentation. Of what moment are all the questions concerning ecclesiastical tradition and ritual in comparison to the great question of the relation between science and religion which is agitating the minds of those who will be the shapers and formers of the next generation?

It is not the simple souls who find their modern gospel in Kidd's "Social Evolution" or in Drummond's "Ascent of Man," good as those simple souls are, that will make the dominant public opinion of the next half century. Nor are the rank-and-file of the clergy—of all denominations—in many instances qualified to engage effectively in this controversy. Their pulpit science has long been a by-word. Unless some defenders of the orthodox position abler than those that have yet appeared can be found, the rationalists will be believed

when they boast, as our author does, that they hold a "fortress that is quite impregnable." Pseudo-science and pseudo-philosophy are not science or philosophy at all.

Our author's book will probably win its way into only a few of the libraries of the orthodox. Rationalists will read it, and will find in it only a vigorous statement of their own opinions. The proper use of the book is to show the orthodox what they have to do, if they would defend their position. . .

It is a challenge which would deserve attention if it stood alone. But it does not stand alone; it is backed up by a great body of philosophers and scientists and social reformers, and men of the highest culture and noblest characters, as well as by a vast amount of smouldering suspicion and distrust and doubt among the people.

National Observer and British Review, APRIL 17, 1897:

Portions of the author's criticisms are not only just, but valuable; and when he is judicious enough to suppress his own personality, he can often be read not only with assent, but with satisfaction. The chief object of Mr. Cecil's antipathy is any attempt at reconciling positive science with religion, whether the religion be Christianity, or merely a natural theism; and, as types of the methods by which the attempt is now being made, he takes the arguments of three modern apologists—Mr. Kidd, Mr. Drummond, and Mr. Arthur Balfour. He takes these in order. The first section of his work is a criticism of "Social Evolution"; the second of "The Ascent of Man"; the third, of "The Foundations of Belief." In completely discrediting the two first of these three works, Mr. Cecil's task has been easy, and he has

shown considerable skill in accomplishing it. If we take Mr. Kidd's "Social Evolution" as it stands, it is difficult to imagine a more signal monument of self-deception; and when we recollect the avidity with which a large section of the public devoured the volume, and allowed themselves to be deceived with the author, we feel that such a fallacious guide can hardly be too trenchantly exposed. Mr. Cecil contrives, with the adroitness of a sharp solicitor, to collect and place side by side a number of Mr. Kidd's self-contradictions, and shows that his argument, taken as a whole, falls to pieces at one touch of serious criticism. He shows also that Mr. Kidd's history is as childish and imperfect as his logic.

. . . But, in spite of these omissions, he has said quite enough to discredit effectually what would rank as the most remarkable specimen of contemporary pseudo-philosophy, if it were not for a specimen produced by a Scottish writer, who has distanced altogether the fallacies of his English rival. This last is Mr. Drummond's "Ascent of Man;" and it is in his criticism of this that Mr. Cecil shows himself at his best. Had he only been less destitute of the rudiments of good behaviour and good feeling, we should have had little but commendation to bestow on the manner in which he exposes Mr. Drummond's absurd justifications of the ways of God to man, and the hopeless inaccuracies of his theories as to altruism, and "the struggle for the life of others." Few books in the long run do more harm than such books as "The Ascent of Man." Instead of really reconciling religion and science, they injure religion by making the attempt at reconciliation ridiculous.

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The Morning Leader, MARCH 25, 1897:

Mr. Cecil is a born fighter. He attacks with courage and cunning and resource, having at command a never-failing artillery of invective to complete the havoc he works by means of his sapping and mining. This latter plan of campaign he mercilessly pursues by quotation after quotation from previous essays and pamphlets of his "irrationalist trio," preparing his reader for the overthrow of the citadel by showing how hollow and unsubstantial are the outworks. So savagely complete, indeed is the attack that as one gazes upon the ruins of Kidd, Drummond, and Balfour, a feeling of sympathy with the fallen philosophers must take the place of joy in the whizzing of the rationalist shells.

The method of attack adopted by this new and puissant slogger shows, perhaps, a little too much contempt for the enemy, a little too much confidence in the impregnability of the attacking party's position. But, although the book may enrage the philosophic doubters, it is bound to make a glorious show for the robuster members of the rationalist party. The author's advice to the former is to "feed on the religious novel of Mrs. Humphry Ward, the geology of Sir J. W. Dawson, the apologetics of Mr. Gladstone, and the biographies of Jesus that are said to be in preparation by Mr. Hall Caine, Mr. Ian Maclaren, and Mr. Crockett—three gentlemen whose capacity for sentimental fiction is the best guarantee of their fitness for such a task." Language of this kind is distinctly provocative, but it may be found bracing enough to the energetic rejector of scientific compromise. Whatever "Pseudo-Philosophy may lack in urbanity and serenity, no charge can be brought against it on the score of dulness or stupidity. The book is at once a brilliant and pitiless exposure of loose thinking, and a literary entertainment of the richest kind.

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